

EXPLANATION OF 23RD BIBLEBOOK

ISAIAH (740-680 BC)

A COLLECTION OF ISAIAH'S PROPHECIES IN ONE BOOK

Archeology of the Book. Two ancient manuscripts of the Isaiah scroll were discovered in the caves of Qumran and were dated about 150 BC and 50 BC. They prove that the Hebrew Masoretic text of Isaiah, which is the original for the translation into English, is absolutely accurate and therefore trustworthy! The Gospel of Luke was written 60-61 AD and speaks of the existence of “the scroll of the prophet Isaiah”¹.

The origin and contents of prophecy. “Above all you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophets’ own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were *carried along by the Holy Spirit*”². The prophets spoke about the future salvation. “Concerning this salvation, the prophets who spoke of the grace that was to come, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which *the Spirit of Christ in them* was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow (during the Messianic Age or New Testament Period)(cf. 52:13 – 53:12)³”.

Most of the prophetic books in the Bible are collections of the different prophecies of the prophet! Isaiah was called to be a prophet in the year Uzziah died (737 BC) and according to Jewish tradition he died in 685 BC. Thus he prophesied for about 52 years. The LORD instructed Isaiah to take a large scroll and write his prophecies on it “as an everlasting witness” to people living in the future (30:8). He probably recorded the prophecies making use of a scribe: “The LORD said to Isaiah” (7:3) or by recording it himself: “The LORD said to me” (8:1). The prophecies came about in various different circumstances during the life of Isaiah (737-685 BC) and were not arranged in a chronological order, even within a collection. Some prophecies were about the same event, e.g. the defeat of the Assyrian army. The collections were united at various times and finally into one book (after the traditional death of Isaiah in 685 BC, 100 years before the exile to Babylon in 586 BC).

Pieces of the Book of Isaiah may originally be from other authors. “A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah after his illness and recovery ...” (38:9) proves that there is no reason why in the same way more pieces of other authors may have been added to the Book of Isaiah, provided that we accept that these authors were also inspired by the real Author of the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and that their inclusion into the Book of Isaiah was guided by the Holy Spirit. See also the two similar passages, Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4. The main contents of the Book are from Isaiah himself (1:1). Isaiah also recorded other events of the reign of Uzziah and Hezekiah⁴.

THE MESSAGE OF ISAIAH.

The Kingdom of God in Isaiah. In the Book of Isaiah the Gentile nations like Assyria and Babylon represent ‘the kingdom of the world’ that opposes the ‘the Kingdom of God’ that is represented by the Israel of God.

The Book of Isaiah and the Book of Revelation. Both books reveal the conflict between the kingdom of the world and the Kingdom of God, the conflict between Satan and Christ⁵! They have the same Author, the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:10-12 and Revelation 1:1) and reveal the main principles in the history salvation within the history of the world: namely, that the world persecutes the people of God, that Jesus Christ is standing in the midst of his people in the world and that the people of God are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ. The Book of Isaiah shows that the New Testament is hidden in the Old Testament and that the Old Testament is fully revealed in the New Testament. The Old Testament is the preparation or prophecy and the New Testament is the fulfilment. Thus, the Old Testament must always be explained in the light of the New Testament!

The most important message of the Old Testament is the revelation of the Servant of the LORD (42:1-7; 49:1-9; 50:4-7 and 52:13 – 53:12). The Servant of the LORD (Jesus Christ) not only *died for his people*, but also *died in the place of his people*. “He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him; and by his wounds we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (53:5-6). He is the substitutional sacrifice of atonement for the sins of his people. He is the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep (John 10:11,16).

Israel in the Book of Isaiah. Isaiah makes a very clear distinction between ‘carnal Israel’ (1 Corinthians 10:18) and ‘God’s Israel’ (Galatians 6:14-16). Isaiah says, “I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.” But concerning Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people” (Isaiah 65:1-2; Romans 10:20-21).

¹ Luke 4:17

² 2 Peter 1:20-21

³ 1 Peter 1:10-11

⁴ 2 Chronicles 26:22; 32:32

⁵ Genesis 3:15; Revelation 12:1-12

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

The book consists of two major parts and 9 sections, each with sub-divisions.

PART 1. CHAPTER 1 - 39. THE ASSYRIAN PERIOD.

which takes its point of departure (mainly) in the conditions during the time of Isaiah's life (roughly the Assyrian Period)(745–669 BC).

SECTION 1. Isaiah 1-12. The glorious things the LORD has done.

This was originally a separate collection with a very apt conclusion: "Make known among the nations what the LORD has done. ... Sing to the LORD for he has done glorious things" (12:4-6).

Chapter 1 is an introduction about the general characterisation of Israel

Chapter 2-5 are prophecies from the oldest period (Uzziah and Jotham)(737-735 BC)

Chapter 6 is a prophecy about Isaiah's calling in the year king Uzziah died (737 BC)

Chapter 7-12 are mainly prophecies from the Syrian-Ephraimite war under king Ahaz (734-727 BC), but chapter 9:8 – 10:4 belong to the oldest period (737-735 BC).

SECTION 2. Isaiah 13-23. Against the Gentile nations and Jerusalem.

This was also originally a separate collection of prophecies at different times (727-715 BC) concerning the Gentile nations and Jerusalem characterised by the words "an oracle concerning ..." (13:1). It also contains prophecies about "Jerusalem, a city of tumult and revelry" (22:1-14), and against "Shebna, a corrupt secretary" (22:15-25).

SECTION 3. Isaiah 24-27. The judgement of the world.

This contains apocalyptic predictions concerning the judgement of the world and the last things.

SECTION 4. Isaiah 28-33. Continuation of history.

This is a historical continuation of chapter 2-12 and of certain parts of chapter 13-23 in the period preceding Jerusalem's oppression by Sennacherib in 701 BC.

SECTION 5. Isaiah 34-35. End of the kingdom of the world and inauguration of the Kingdom of God.

This is an eschatological final chord (as in chapter 24-27).

SECTION 6. Isaiah 36-39. Conflict between Sennacherib and Hezekiah.

This is an historical intermezzo that shows Isaiah's involvement in the conflict between Sennacherib and Hezekiah between 705-701 BC. The delegation from Babel (chapter 39) introduces the second period, the Babylonian Period.

PART 2. CHAPTER 40-66. THE BABYLONIAN PERIOD.

which takes its point of departure in the conditions later during the Babylonian exile (roughly the Babylonian Period)(586-516 BC).

The pronouncement "There is no peace", says the LORD, "for the wicked" (48:22 and 57:21) divides part two in approximately three sections.

SECTION 7. Isaiah 40:1 - 49:13. The liberation from Babel and the Servant of the LORD.

SECTION 8. Isaiah 49:14 - 55:13. The restoration of Zion and the Servant of the LORD.

SECTION 9. Isaiah 56:1 - 66:24. Prophecies about Zion and a variety of other subjects.

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| (1) Chapter 56. | Salvation for the proselytes and eunuchs. |
| (2) Chapter 57a. | Sin of the Israelites. |
| (3) Chapter 57b. | Salvation for the devout remnant. |
| (4) Chapter 58. | False and true religion. |
| (5) Chapter 59. | Salvation only after repentance. |
| (6) Chapters 60 - 62. | The salvation of Zion. |
| (7) Chapters 63:1-6. | The day of vengeance. |
| (8) Chapter 63:7 – 64:12. | Prayer of penance, imploring redemption. |
| (9) Chapter 65. | Judgement for provocative Israel. Salvation for the servants of the LORD. |
| (10) Chapter 66. | Idolators punished. Zion glorified. |

THE ASSYRIAN KINGS MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE

who ruled at the peak of the Assyrian empire (745–669 BC) were:

- **Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul)** (745-727 BC). He restored Assyria to a major world power. He began to destroy Samaria, the capital of *the northern kingdom of Israel*. He carried many away into captivity. This captivity is mentioned in his own inscriptions, the Babylonian Chronicle. Biblical records describe how Tiglath-Pileser III exacted 1000 talents of silver as tribute from king Menahem⁶ and later defeated his successor Pekah⁷. Pekah had allied with Rezin, king of the Arameans against Ahaz (king of Judah, *the southern kingdom of Israel*), who responded by appealing for the Assyrian monarch's help by using the Temple gold and silver⁸. Tiglath-Pileser answered swiftly. He first marched his army down the eastern Mediterranean coast, taking coastal cities all the way to Egypt. This cut off his enemies' access to the sea. Once this was achieved, he returned to the northern kingdom of Israel, destroyed their army, and deported their people to Assyria⁹. He then installed an Israelite puppet king, Hoshea, in the place of Pekah¹⁰.
- **Shalmaneser V** (727-722 BC). He besieged Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. The city's fall (722 BC) ended the northern kingdom of Israel, and nearly thirty thousand Israelites were deported and resettled across the Assyrian Empire¹¹. This specific resettlement resulted in the famous 'loss of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel'.
- **Sargon II** (722-705 BC). He completed the destruction of Samaria and the captivity of Israel. He was also famous for his magnificent palace with his colossal winged guardians.
- **Sennacherib** (705-681 BC). He was the most famous of the Assyrian kings. He mentions the name of Hezekiah on his prism during his war campaigns, he claimed to have "Hezekiah captured in his own royal city (Jerusalem) like a caged bird." Sennacherib's army was defeated at the gates of Jerusalem by the Angel of the Lord. Sennacherib returned to Nineveh and was killed violently by two of his own sons¹². He also conquered Babylon.
- **Esarhaddon** (681-669 BC). He rebuilt Babylon, invaded and conquered Egypt by crossing over the Sinai Desert with Arab camels carrying water for his army, and was one of Assyria's greatest kings. He died fighting Egypt.
- **Ashurbanipal** (668-631 BC). At the time of his reign the Neo-Assyrian Empire was the largest empire in the world, stretching from Cyprus in the west to Iran in the east, and at one point it even included Egypt. Its capital Nineveh (Mosul in modern-day Iraq) was the world's largest city. He destroyed the Thebes in Egypt and created the first systematically organized library, a collection of over 30,000 clay tablets. He is considered the last great king of Assyria.

⁶ 2 Kings 15:19

⁷ 2 Kings 15:29

⁸ 2 Kings 16:5-9

⁹ 2 Kings 15:29; 1 Chronicles 5:26

¹⁰ 2 Kings 17:1-6

¹¹ 2 Kings 18:9-12; 2 Kings 17:24-40

¹² Isaiah 36-37

EXPLANATION OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

PART 1. CHAPTERS 1-39. THE ASSYRIAN PERIOD (745 - 669 BC)

SECTION 1. Isaiah 1-12.

The glorious things the LORD has done.

Sub-division 1. Isaiah 1-5. Rebellious Israel.

The oldest prophecies of Isaiah are from the time of Uzziah and Jotham (737-735 BC). Isaiah chapter 1 is placed at the beginning as a general characterisation of Israel. It dates from a time when the land was destroyed (1:5-9), probably during the Syrian-Ephraimite war under king Ahaz (734-727 BC). Isaiah chapters 2 to 4 belong to the period before the Syrian-Ephraimite war (the time of Jotham). Also Isaiah 9:8 - 10:4 probably belongs to this period. Since the time of king Solomon, Israel had not enjoyed such great prosperity and wealth as under king Uzziah and Jotham (2:6-16; 3:16-24). Especially religion and moral life was at a low point among the people of substance.

Chapter 1. Rebellious and corrupt Israel is judged.

The word 'vision' (1:1) refers to a prophetic revelation given through the means of inner super sensory observation. This vision covers the history of Uzziah to Hezekiah. The prophet is also called 'a seer' (of visions)(30:10).

(i) Israel is like Sodom and Gomorrah (1:1-10). The 'LORD' is the name of God who made a covenant with Israel and 'children' is a designation for the people of Israel reared by the LORD. His 'fatherhood'¹³ refers first of all to them as his specially created and chosen (firstborn) children¹⁴. The sinful nation and corrupt children of Israel (during the time of Isaiah) have forsaken the LORD (1:2-4). The country is desolate, the cities burned and the fields stripped by foreigners (1:7). 'Zion' was originally the hill on which the palace and temple were built, but later a name for the whole of Jerusalem (1:8). *The LORD will leave some survivors¹⁵, but the rest of the nation of Israel will be like Sodom and Gomorrah* (1:9-10), cf. Israel being called "not my people"¹⁶.

(ii) Israel's worship is meaningless (1:11-20). The LORD exhorts Israel, "Stop bringing meaningless offerings" (practising religion like the other religions do)(1:11-15)¹⁷. If Israel stops doing wrong (i.e. repent) and learn to do right¹⁸, the LORD will make her sins white as snow (that is, forgive all her sins)(1:16-19).

(iii) Jerusalem has become a harlot (1:21-31). During the Syrian-Ephraimite war (734-727 BC) the city of Jerusalem became a harlot and the leaders (rulers) of Israel rebels, thieves and corrupt (1:21-23). Those who had forsaken the LORD will be like trees with withering leaves and like a garden without water that is set ablaze (1:28,31). After avenging himself on his enemies (the corrupt judges and counsellors) in Israel, the LORD will restore Jerusalem to become the city of righteousness (1:24-31)¹⁹.

Chapter 2-4. The true and the false glory of Israel.

(i) The Last Days (2:1-5). *Due to Micah 3:12 (the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple), Micah 4:1-3 rather than Isaiah 2:2-4 is probably original. The prophecy looks to the future salvation. "In the last days (= the Messianic Age or the New Testament period)²⁰ ... all nations will stream to the mountain of the LORD's temple (= the LORD's new community, the Church)²¹. From Jerusalem the Word of God (the gospel)²² will go out to all the nations* and those who listen will beat their swords into ploughshares. This is being fulfilled in the New Testament period²³.

(ii) The Day of Judgement for all (2:6 - 4:6). In Isaiah's day (during the reign of Jotham), however, the nation of Israel was full of the superstitions from the East and occultism (practising divination) (2:6), the land was full of man-made idols (2:8) and the people were proud and arrogant. "The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty". He will humble all that is exalted (2:12), when he will bring the arrogance of man low (2:17), when he will rise to shake the earth (2:19)²⁴ and take his place in court to judge (3:13)²⁵. He will judge *the judges, prophets and craftsmen (3:2-3), *the youth who oppress his people and *the women who rule²⁶ over them (3:4,5,12), *the elders and leaders who lead his people astray, ruin his vineyard (the community of believers) and crush his people (3:14-15), and he will make *the haughty and flirting women destitute (3:16 - 4:1).

¹³ Isaiah 63:16; 64:8

¹⁴ Exodus 4:22; Deuteronomy 14:1-2

¹⁵ The elect believers. Cf. Romans 11:4-10. The others were hardened.

¹⁶ Hosea 1:9

¹⁷ Note. "God is Spirit and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

"Religion that God accepts is to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27).

¹⁸ Micah 6:6-8

¹⁹ cf. "the LORD is there" (Ezekiel 48:35). "The heavenly/new Jerusalem" (Revelation 21:10).

²⁰ From the first coming of Christ (Hebrews 1:2; 9:26; Acts 2:17) to the second coming (John 6:39-30; John 12:48) = the New Testament period.

²¹ Ephesians 2:19-22

²² Acts 1:8

²³ Luke 2:30-32

²⁴ Hebrews 12:27; Revelation 6:15-17

²⁵ Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:22; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-12

²⁶ cf. Amos 4:1

In the Messianic Age (the New Testament period) the LORD (through the Branch/the Messiah)(11:1-5)²⁷ will cleanse his people by a spirit of judgement and a spirit of fire (4:4) and protect his people day and by night by creating a canopy (shelter) over them. (4:6)²⁸.

Chapter 5. Unfruitful and corrupt Israel threatened by attack by distant nations and exile.

(i) Woe to carnal Israel (5:1-23). The nation of Israel (during the reign of Jotham) was intended to be the LORD's vineyard (3:14), destined to bear good fruit, but she yielded only bad fruit. Israel is full of bloodshed and cries of distress due to her unrighteousness (5:1-7); unclean lips (6:5) and unjust laws (10:1). God's anger burns against the unrighteous people. There are 7 woes:

- Woe to the materialists: those who join field to field until they live alone in the land (5:8).
- Woe to the secularists: those who have no regard for the deeds of the LORD (5:12).
- Woe to the wicked: those who draw sin along with cords (5:18).
- Woe to the relativists: those who call evil 'good' and good 'evil', who put 'darkness' for 'light' and light for darkness' and 'bitter' for 'sweet' and 'sweet' for 'bitter' (5:20).
- Woe to the humanists: who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight (5:21).
- Woe to the drinkers of alcohol and to those who mix their drinks (5:22).
- Woe to the corrupt lawyers: who acquit the guilty for a bribe and deny justice to the innocent (5:23).

(ii) Israel will go into exile (5:24-30). Because Israel rejected the Word of God, the LORD's anger burns against his people (5:24-25)²⁹. Therefore Israel will go into exile to Assyria (5:13). The Assyrian king, Tiglath Pileser (745-727 BC), from that distant nation is already in Syria and approaching Judah (5:26-30).

Sub-division 2. Isaiah 6. The calling and commission of Isaiah.

Chapter 6. The calling and commission of Isaiah.

(i) The mission (6:1-10). *Possibly the first chapter of a separate collection (chapters 6-12) that was later united to the previous collection (chapters 1-5).* In a vision Isaiah saw the LORD seated in heaven³⁰. He called Isaiah to be a prophet (737 BC). *Isaiah must preach salvation (6:7) and especially judgement (6:9-10)! Those who have hardened their hearts will no longer be able to see, hear, understand, turn and be healed³¹.*

(ii) The time (6:11-13). For how long? Until the LORD has sent everyone into exile³², the land of Israel is forsaken and only the holy remnant (a tenth)(6:13) remains as a stump (cf. 11:1) in the land!

Sub-division 3. Isaiah 7 - 12. The kingdom of the world and the Kingdom of God.

Prophecies from the period of the Syrian-Ephraimite war (734-727 BC). The chapters do not date from the same time, but are united in the theme: *"the contrast between the kingdom of the world and the Kingdom of God". These are prophecies to which people must take note in modern times when they polarise and take sides with conflicting nations instead of associating themselves with the Kingdom of God.* Isaiah 9:8 - 10:4 dates from Isaiah's earliest period and Isaiah 10:5-34 from the time of Sargon. Sargon II was the king of the Neo-Assyrian Empire from 722 BC to his death in battle in 705 BC. He was probably the son of Tiglath-Pileser III who reigned from 745-727 BC.

Because Ahaz, the 14th king of the southern kingdom of Judah (734-727 BC) walked in the ways of the northern kingdom of Israel (Ephraim)³³, the LORD handed him over to king Rezin of Aram (Syria) and king Pekah, the 18th king of the northern kingdom of Israel. They marched up against Ahaz, killed 120,000 soldiers (or 120 clans of Judah, because the Hebrew word 'elef' could mean 'thousand' or 'clan'). They made even more prisoners³⁴. Ahaz then appealed to the king of Assyria to rescue him. God sent the prophet Isaiah and his first son 'Shear Jashub' (the name means: God's promise that "a remnant will return")(7:3) to exhort Ahaz to trust in the LORD and not to trust in the king of Assyria by making an alliance with him.

Chapter 7:1 - 9:7. Two kinds of helpers: either the nations of the world or Immanuel (God with us).

(i) The sign from God is Immanuel (7:1-25). A virgin (unmarried girl) would give birth to a boy called 'Immanuel' (the name means: "God with us") (7:1-15)³⁵. But Ahaz (king of Judah/southern Israel) refused the evidence upon which his faith might have been established and instead depended on the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser to rescue him from Aram and northern Israel.

²⁷ Jeremiah 23:5-6

²⁸ cf. being sealed on the forehead that protects the people of God from the harm caused by the seal judgements and trumpet judgements (Revelation 7:3-4; 8:4)

²⁹ cf. John 3:36

³⁰ Revelation 4:2-3

³¹ Matthew 13:13-15; Romans 11:7-10

³² cf. 2 Kings 18:9-12

³³ 2 Kings 16; 2 Chronicles 28

³⁴ 2 Chronicles 28:6

³⁵ cf. Matthew 1:21-23

Tiglath Pileser punished the city of Damascus in Aram in 734 BC and the city of Samaria in northern Israel in 722 BC (7:16), deported many northern Israelites to Assyria³⁶ and colonized the northern kingdom of Israel with foreign people³⁷. *Instead of Assyria becoming the means of rescuing Judah, as Ahaz had hoped, it became God's means to punish Judah.* 65 years later, in 669 BC (7:8), the Assyrian kings Esarhaddon (681-669 BC) and Ashurbanipal (669-631 BC) came as “the flies from Egypt and bees from Assyria” (7:18) and as “a razor hired from beyond the Euphrates to shave the heads, legs and beards” of Judah (7:20) and “turn the land of milk and honey and thousand vineyards into briars and thorns!”

(ii) The floodwaters of the Euphrates (8:1-10). With the name of Isaiah's second son by a prophetess 'Maher Shalal Hash Baz' (the name means: “quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil”) (8:1) God warned that the advancing Assyrians (representing the kingdom of the world) would be “quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil”. Because the southern kingdom of Israel (Judah) rejected “the gently flowing waters of Shiloah” (a symbol representing the LORD)³⁸, the LORD brought “the mighty floodwaters of the River Euphrates” (a symbol representing the Assyrian army) to swirl over Judah. Judah is called ‘Immanuel’ here (8:10), because the land belonged to God. Although the nations, including Achaz of Judah, “devised a strategy” to defend themselves against Assyria (they sacrificed to other gods and raided the temple and palace to send gifts to the Assyrians)³⁹, the plan would be thwarted, because “*God is on the side of the believing remnant, that is, always on the side of the Kingdom of God*” (8:8-10)!

(iii) The warning not to follow the unbelieving majority (8:11-15). The LORD warned Isaiah “not to follow the way of the unbelievers in Judah”, “not to call everything ‘a conspiracy’ what the political leaders of Judah called a conspiracy and not to fear what Judah feared, because the LORD Almighty is the One they must fear. “The LORD will be a sanctuary (a shelter) only for the believing remnant, but for the unbelievers in both houses of Israel (the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel that rely on Assyria) he will be a rock that causes people to stumble and a trap/snare in which they will be snared and captured”.

(iv) The believing minority will be the sign and symbol of God (8:16-22). “*The prophet Isaiah and his disciples are signs and symbols in Israel from the LORD Almighty.*” *The believers must bind up (seal, preserve) God's testimony (the prophecies of Isaiah, the revelation of God, God's Word the Bible), never consult mediums and spiritists “who whisper and mutter”, but rather inquire from their God. The unbelievers who do not speak according to this word will be thrust into utter darkness. They will only experience distress, darkness and fearful gloom.*

(v) The future Kingdom of God (9:1-7). In the past God humbled the northern kingdom of Israel by its deportation to Assyria (734 BC), but in the future he will honour Galilee of the Gentiles (formerly a part of this northern kingdom of Israel): the people (both Jews as well as Gentiles) walking in darkness will see a great Light (the Messiah and his Great Galilean Ministry)⁴⁰. The nation will rejoice at the birth of a child. This child will be called:

- ‘Wonderful Counsellor’ because he surpasses the mere human reality and human wisdom (11:2).
- ‘Mighty God’ because he participates in the Divine Being (9:6; 10:21)⁴¹.
- ‘Everlasting Father’ because he lovingly cares as a father to his children (22:21-22)⁴².
- ‘Prince of Peace’ because he brings peace between God and man and between man and man.

The magnitude and duration of his Kingship of peace and justice surpasses all earthly reign and will increase forever. Where darkness was the thickest, people would first see the light and experience salvation! The child would be born in Judah of the Jews (Bethlehem), but raised in Galilee of the Gentiles (Nazareth).

Chapter 9:8 - 10:4. The LORD's message of anger against the northern kingdom of Israel (Ephraim).

This prophecy is probably one of Isaiah's oldest prophecies. Four couplets about the judgement of the LORD, each ending with the same refrain: “Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away”. The fulfilment came initially from Tiglath Pileser carrying a part of Israel into exile⁴³. And thereafter the fall of Samaria (722 BC).

(i) The message (Word of God) falls like a heavy stone on Israel, shattering it (9:8-12). Against Israel's pride and arrogance, boasting that they would rebuild the land better than it was before. But the LORD strengthened king Resin's enemies against them. The Arameans and Philistines attacked Israel from both sides. Yet it did not lead to Israel's repentance⁴⁴.

(ii) The LORD cuts off from Israel both head and tail (9:13-17). ‘The head’ is a symbol of the political leaders and prominent men. ‘The tail’ is a symbol of the religious prophets who teach lies and mislead the people. “But the people did not return to him who struck them and did not seek the LORD”.

(iii) The wrath of the LORD scorches the land and the people are fuel for the fire (9:18-21). The tribes and people of Israel turn against one another and devour one another. Because they refuse to repent, the hand of the LORD remains raised against them.

³⁶ 2 Kings 15:29

³⁷ Ezra 4:2. In the New Testament period Samaria was a nation of mixed Jews and non-Jews. Galilee consisted of very many non-Jews.

³⁸ cf. John 9:7

³⁹ 2 Chronicles 28:21-23

⁴⁰ The Great Galilean Ministry of Jesus Christ, 16 months from December A.D. 27 to April A.D. 29 (John 4:43 – 6:71).

⁴¹ John 1:1,14; Colossians 2:9

⁴² A father to believers (Isaiah 22:21-22; 2 Kings 13:14; a father to the needy (Job 29:16); a father to the orphans and widows (Psalm 68:5).

⁴³ 2 Kings 15:29

⁴⁴ cf. Revelation 16:8-11

(iv) What will they do on the day of reckoning (10:1-4)? “Woe to those who make unjust laws and oppressive decrees in order to withhold justice from people. To whom will they run for help? Where will they leave their riches?”(10:3). All that remains is that the Israelites from the northern kingdom of Israel will cringe among the captives in exile to Assyria. Still the LORD’s anger is not turned away.

Chapter 10:5-34. The humiliation of the kingdom of the world (represented by Assyria).

The prophecy does not refer to Tiglath Pileser’s invasion into northern Israel (734 BC), but to the fall of Samaria (722 BC), the conquering by Sargon of Carchemish (717 BC), the rich capital of the Hittites on the Euphrates (10:9) and Sargon’s intention to invade Jerusalem (10:11). The prophecy is therefore dated around 715 BC. The prophecy about the collapse of the great Assyrian Empire began to be fulfilled by the oppression under Sennacherib (705-681 BC) up to the gate of Jerusalem (701 BC) and is only finally completed by the fall of Nineve (612 BC)⁴⁵.

(i) The judgement of Assyria (10:5-19). Assyria’s task was to be ‘the rod of God’s anger’ and ‘the club of God’s wrath’, an instrument in God’s hand *to punish* other godless nations like Samaria in 734 BC⁴⁶, Damascus in 732 BC⁴⁷, Carchemish in 717 BC and Israel and Judah! But Assyria had other intentions, namely, *to destroy* these other nations instead. Therefore after the LORD finished his work against Jerusalem, he would punish the king of Assyria for his wilful pride and boasting that he had removed boundaries of nations, plundered their treasures and subdued their kings (10:13). The LORD says, “Does the axe raise itself above him (the LORD) who swings it (10:15)! Therefore the LORD will send a wasting disease upon Assyria’s soldiers. The Light of Israel will be the blazing flame⁴⁸ that will consume their thorns (things of little value) and destroy the splendour of their forests and fertile fields (things of much value)(10:16-19).

(ii) The salvation of God’s people (10:20-27). *The humiliation of the kingdom of the world brings about the salvation of the LORD’s people.* The remnant of Israel, the survivors of the house of Jacob, will no longer rely on Assyria, but must trust the LORD. The return of the remnant from exile is figuratively a return of believers in the Mighty God (the name for the Messiah, Jesus Christ)(9:6; 10:20-23). The LORD Almighty had decreed destruction upon the rest of the land (10:22). The believers need not be afraid of the Assyrians (representing the kingdom of the world)(10:24). In that day (the day of salvation) the yoke of foreign domination on their necks will be broken (10:27).

(iii) The threatening march of Sennacherib of Assyria towards Jerusalem is halted by the LORD (10:28-34). People tremble, flee and take cover, but Assyria had not taken account of the LORD sitting on the throne of the universe (6:1). He will fell the tall forest trees of the Lebanon (a symbol of the utter humiliation and destruction of the proud Sennacherib)(701 BC) (10:33-34; cf. 2:12-18).

Chapter 11-12. The exaltation of the Kingdom of God.

The theme is war and peace. Because of the contrast between *the clamour of war* (10:6) and Assyria’s humiliation (10:12-19) in the kingdom of the world in chapter 10 and *the exaltation of peace* (11:1-9) in the Kingdom of God in chapter 11, this prophecy dates from the same period (715 BC). However Isaiah 11:10-16 probably dates from the Babylonian Period. The prophecies in the Book of Isaiah peak (climax) in the coming salvation within the Messianic Kingdom (the New Testament period)!

(i) The coming of the Branch during the New Testament period (11:1-9). A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse (the leftover of the royal house of David), from his roots a Branch (the Messiah, Jesus Christ) will bear fruit (11:1). This is a divine contrast with ‘the tall forest trees of the Lebanon’ (10:33-34).

The sevenfold Spirit of the LORD (representing the divine fullness of the Holy Spirit) will rest on this Branch at his first coming (11:2-3)⁴⁹. The future Messianic Kingdom will not have a liturgical/ceremonial nature, but have a spiritual nature⁵⁰. His reign from his first coming and his final judgement at his second coming will be just (11:4-5). The renewal of the earth and the final phase of the Messianic Kingdom of Peace (cf. 2:4; 9:6) is depicted as perfect harmony between animals and people (11:6-9)⁵¹.

(ii) The return of the (believing) remnant during the Old Testament period (11:10-16). *This prophecy takes its point of departure in the conditions later during the Babylonian exile.* In that day (when the exiles return) the LORD will reclaim the remnant of his people from Assyria, Egypt (the two world empires in the Assyrian Period, in the day of Isaiah), also reclaim the remnant of his people from Ethiopia, Elam, Babylonia and Hamath (the four quarters of the earth in the Babylonian Period, when Isaiah no longer lived). He will symbolically dry up the gulf of the Egyptian Sea and break the Euphrates River into seven streams, that is, he will break the former foreign domination (by Assyria and later by Babylon), so that there will (symbolically) be a highway for the remnant of his people from Egypt and Assyria to return (to the land of Israel) (cf. 35:8-10).

⁴⁵ Nahum 1:1 (650-620 BC)

⁴⁶ 2 Kings 15:27-30

⁴⁷ 2 Kings 16:9

⁴⁸ cf. Deuteronomy 9:3; Hebrews 12:29

⁴⁹ Matthew 3:16-17; Revelation 1:4; 5:6; Colossians 2:9

⁵⁰ John 4:21-24

⁵¹ cf. Matthew 5:5; Romans 8:19-21

The exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12) and the return from exile in Babylon (Ezra 1-2) are types for the antitype: salvation in the New Testament period⁵². The promises given to the chosen remnant of believers during the Old Testament period are fulfilled in the chosen remnant of believers during the New Testament period⁵³. During the Old Testament period the believing slaves⁵⁴ and aliens⁵⁵ (Gentiles) were merged into the nation of Israel. But during the New Testament period believing Christians, who are mainly branches from the wild olive tree (Gentiles), are grafted into the cultivated olive tree on a complete equal footing with the believing Jews! They are not grafted into the natural (carnal) nation of Israel, but into the (spiritual) Israel of God⁵⁶!

(iii) 'The day of salvation' in every period (12:1-6). In that day (the day of salvation in every period) *the believing remnant will say, "The LORD is my strength, my song and my salvation."* In that day they will give thanks and proclaim to all the world what the LORD has done. They will shout aloud and sing for joy.

SECTION 2. Isaiah 13-23.

The LORD's judgement of the Gentile nations and Jerusalem.

These prophecies are not in chronological order. In this prophecy against Babylon (13:1 – 14:23), the prophet's point of departure is not the time (history) in which he lives, but he is translated by the Spirit to a time in the future when the world power had passed on from Assyria to Babylon and Judah had been carried into exile to Babylon, to a time in which Isaiah no longer lived (cf. Part 2). The prophecy against Babylon (chapter 13-14) is placed here, because the defeat of Babylon will be as certain as the defeat of Assyria!

The prophecy against Assyria (chapter 14:24-27) is dated about 715 BC.

The prophecy against the Philistines (chapter 14:28-32) is dated 727 BC when Achaz and Tiglat Pileser died.

The prophecy against Moab (chapter 15-16) is dated 715 BC when Assyria invaded the Arab tribes.

The prophecy against the Arameans/Syrians and Israelites of the northern kingdom of Israel (chapter 17:1-11) is dated 734 BC just before Tiglath Pileser punished Samaria.

The prophecies against Ethiopia and Egypt (chapters 18-20) are also dated about 715 BC.

Chapter 13:1 - 14:23. A prophecy against Babylon.

The prophecy is dated during the Babylonian Period (586-516 BC).

(i) The overthrow of Babylon is figurative for the last judgement (13:1-22)⁵⁷. Babylon represents the world power against God⁵⁸. 'The day of the LORD' in the prophetic books is the great day of the downfall of the world and the last judgement of all nations when it is beyond mercy and only God's wrath is poured out (13:6,9). Sun, moon and stars will be darkened (13:10)⁵⁹. God will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their sins and put an end to the arrogant and ruthless (13:11). The LORD will stir up the Medes (king Cyrus) (13:17) to overthrow Babylon (539 BC), the jewel of kingdoms, like Sodom and Gomorrah (13:19). Babylon is the worldly city, the centre of the kingdom of the world. It will become inhabitable (13:20-22).

(ii) The return from exile is figurative for salvation (14:1-2). After the return from exile the LORD will once again choose Israel and settle them in their own land. Aliens (non-Jews) will join them and unite with the Israelites. The house of Israel (a symbol of the people of God) will rule over their oppressors and possess the nations. This is the Old Testament way of saying that the Kingdom of God will be extended to all nations and that Jesus Christ and his Church will inherit the new earth.

(iii) The mockery of the king of Babylon and his fall is depicted in terms of the fall of Satan (14:3-23). The morning star (Venus on the horizon) looks like a star cast out of the universe (14:12). Hell is depicted as the spirits of dead kings in their graves rising up to mock the arrival of the king of Babylon, the leader of the kingdom of the world (14:9). The king's wicked attempt to make himself like the highest, God⁶⁰, brings him to the lowest, hell! In Babylonian mythology the gods dwelled on a mountain in the north (14:13-15). The king of Babylon is the type of the antichrist⁶¹ and of the Satan⁶² being humiliated and bound. The LORD will make him who made the world a desert a rejected corpse trampled underfoot (14:16-23).

⁵² 1 Corinthians 10:1-2. Three types: creation (out of chaos), salvation (exodus out of slavery) and restoration (return from exile) repeatedly appear in the Old Testament. However, the writers of the New Testament believed that these repeated events (creation, salvation, restoration) find their real and final significance and fulfilment (antitype) in and through the recreation, salvation and renewal work of Jesus Christ!

⁵³ Romans 11:1-26. The chosen and believing remnant of Israel (the Israel of God) (Romans 9:6; 11:17-24; Galatians 3:7; 4:21-31; 6:12-16; Ephesians 2:19; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 12:22; 1 Peter 2:9) versus the unbelievers in Israel (carnal Israel) (1 Corinthians 10:18). All promises in the Old Testament are 'Yes' (are being fulfilled) in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 1:21). The believers respond with an 'Amen'!

⁵⁴ Slaves. Genesis 17:12-13

⁵⁵ Aliens. Isaiah 56:4-8

⁵⁶ Chosen believers. Genesis 22:17-18; Romans 9:6b; Galatians 6:14-16

⁵⁷ cf. Revelation 18

⁵⁸ Revelation 18:2

⁵⁹ Matthew 24:29

⁶⁰ 2 Thessalonians 2:4

⁶¹ Daniel 11:36

⁶² Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:9

Chapter 14:24-27. A prophecy against Assyria.

The prophecy is dated about 715 BC.

(i) The LORD's plan cannot and will not fail (14:24). The crushing and trampling of the Assyrians (representing the kingdom of the world) will definitely be carried out! No one can prevent it (cf. 8:8-10; 10:32-34)!

(ii) What happens on the mountains of Israel has world historical significance (14:25a)!

- Joel pictures the end as the final judgement of the nations (the kingdom of the world) in the valley of Jehoshaphat⁶³.
- Ezekiel pictures the end as the day when Gog and many nations invade the mountains of Israel⁶⁴.
- Zechariah pictures the end as the day of battle on the Mount of Olives⁶⁵.
- John in Revelation pictures the end as the battle of Armageddon (i.e. the mountains of Megiddo)⁶⁶.

Chapter 14:28-32. A prophecy against the Philistines.

This prophecy dates from 727 BC when Ahaz and Tiglath Pileser died.

The fact that they died made the Philistines rejoice (14:29). The Philistines sent a delegation to Israel to persuade them to join the alliance against Assyria (14:32). But speaking through Isaiah *the LORD is against involving Judah (a symbol of God's people) into world politics!* They must not join the rebellion.

The Assyrian Empire is compared to a tree that has been felled. Out of its root sprouts a snake (representing Tiglat Pileser), and from that snake sprouts a viper (representing Sargon who attacked the Philistines in 721-729 BC) and from the viper a venomous serpent (representing Sennacherib)(14:29). The root of the Philistines will be destroyed by its burning cities (14:31). The answer to the envoys is that the LORD has established Judah (representing the Kingdom of God) and there the afflicted people will find shelter (14:32).

Chapter 15-16. A prophecy against the Moabites.

The prophecy is dated about 715 BC.

(i) The oppressors against Moab (15:1-9). *The prophecy places itself in the future as if it is the present.* In 734 BC Tiglath Pileser carried the Transjordan Israel into exile. Moab that originated from Lot, the nephew of Abraham⁶⁷, settled in their place. When they too were oppressed, "everything was ruined ... destroyed in a night" etc. (15:1). The heads and beards of the Moabites were shaved off, they wore sackcloth, wailed in public or fled to the south (15:5).

(ii) The refugees from Moab (16:1-14). Moab must flee to Zion, submit to the ruler with a tribute and find shelter there (16:1). *The Israelites must hide the fugitives from Moab, not betray the refugees from Moab, but give them shelter from the destroyer* (16:3). The oppressor (the Assyrian king) will come to an end, destruction will cease and the aggressor will vanish from the land. "In love a throne will be established (in Israel); in faithfulness a man will sit on it, one from the house of David, one who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness". This is *a reference to king Hezekiah (713-696 BC) as a type of Jesus Christ* (16:3-5)! Even Isaiah shows empathy and weeps about the calamity falling on Moab during the harvest (16:8-10). Through Isaiah the LORD says, "When the Moabites appear at their (idolatrous) high place to seek help, she only wears herself out; when she goes to her shrine to pray, it is to no avail" (16:12-13). The Assyrian invasion against Arab tribes in 715 BC eventually also affected Moab. The survivors in Moab would be few and feeble (16:14).

Chapter 17:1-11. A prophecy against the Arameans (Syrians) and Northern Israel.

The prophecy is dated about 734 BC.

Ruined cities, treasures carried away, bad harvests and abandoned idols (17:1-11). Damascus will no longer be a city, a kingdom (17:1). The Transjordan cities of Israel will become a heap of stones and the land deserted with flocks abandoned by their shepherds (17:2). 'The glory of the Israelites' refers to the fleeting treasures and people carried away (17:3). They will not look at their altars and Asherah poles (personification of female power in nature) (17:8). Their strong cities will lie in ruins, abandoned to thickets and undergrowth (17:9). This was fulfilled in 734 BC when Samaria was invaded (and finally conquered in 722 BC) and in 732 BC when Damascus was conquered.

Chapter 17:12-14. A prophecy against the Assyrians.

The Assyrian army consisted of many different nations (17:12-14). "The raging of the nations is like the roaring of great waters" (17:12, cf. 8:7). When the LORD rebukes them, they flee away, driven before the wind like chaff before the wind and like tumbleweed before a gale (17:13). This is the portion of the Assyrians who looted and plundered Judah (us)(17:14). This was fulfilled in 701 BC when the Angel of the LORD put 185.000 Assyrians to death⁶⁸ (37:36).

⁶³ Joel 3:12

⁶⁴ Ezekiel 38:8; 39:2-4

⁶⁵ Zacharia 14:1-5

⁶⁶ Revelation 16:16

⁶⁷ Genesis 19:37

⁶⁸ Isaiah 37:36

Chapter 18. A prophecy against Cush (upper Egypt: Sudan + Ethiopia).

The prophecy is dated about 715 BC. Chapter 18 speaks of Ethiopia, ‘the land of whirring wings’ (of the tsetse flies)’ (18:1), chapter 19 speaks of Egypt and chapter 20 speaks of both, because these two countries were at some time united in one kingdom. The two warring states (Egypt and Assyria) involved Palestine and Syria that lay between them in their battles. The Assyrians advanced via Palestine against Upper Egypt, a people tall and smooth skinned, a people feared far and wide, an aggressive nation with a strange speech, whose land is divided by rivers (the Blue and White Nile)(18:2). The Ethiopians sent envoys by papyrus boats over the water (of the Nile to Judah to persuade Judah to an anti-Assyrian alliance)(715 BC)(18:1), but the LORD urged them to go back, because something big (the destruction of the Assyrians) was going to happen. When the banners are raised and trumpets are sounded, *the LORD will at first remain quiet and look on from his dwelling place* like shimmering heat (he will refrain from acting)(18:3-4). But before the Assyrians reach their goal, the LORD will cut their shoots off with pruning knives and cut down and remove their spreading branches (18:5). The Assyrians will suddenly be destroyed (cf. 10:32-34). This prophecy was fulfilled in Isaiah 37:36 (701 BC). The wild animals and birds will feed on the Assyrians (18:6). *But the Ethiopians will submit to the LORD and honour him with gifts*⁶⁹ (18:7). *The political events in the world must serve the coming of the Kingdom of God to all the nations in the world.*

Chapter 19. A prophecy of judgement against Egypt and of salvation of Egypt.

The prophecy is dated about 715 BC.

(i) A prophecy of judgement (19:1-17). *Next to Assyria and Babylon, Egypt is the main representative of the kingdom of the world! The LORD himself is the Great Opponent of the kingdom of the world* (19:1,2,4,14,16). *The prophet Isaiah uses local conditions in Egypt to describe the LORD’s judgement of the kingdom of the world.* The Egyptians will consult their idols and the spirits of the dead, the mediums and the spiritists, *but the LORD will still bring their plans to nothing*, hand them over to a cruel master and have them lose heart. The LORD will stir up civil war between several city states in the Nile Delta (Zoan, Memphis)(19:11-15) before the time of Shabako⁷⁰ and make a cruel master (Shabako) dominate them (19:2-4). The waters of the Nile will dry up, the irrigation channels will stink, the streams will dwindle, the papyrus rushes will wither, every sown field will be parched and their industries will collapse (19:5-10). The Lord challenges the Egyptian wise men to prophecy as the LORD Almighty does about his plans against Egypt (19:12). Also their political officials will become fools. The Lord will pour a spirit of dizziness out that will cause the Egyptians to stagger like drunken men in their vomit in everything they do (19:13-17).

The fulfilment of this prophecy need not be limited to a particular period, because Egypt suffered several times under a cruel master! For example: Psamtik I (664-610 BC) and his son Necho who forced 120.000 Egyptians to slavery to dig a channel between the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea. Nevertheless, this doom prophecy is rather fulfilled in the conquests of rulers like Esarhaddon (670 BC), Cambyses (525 BC) Artaxerxes III (342 BC) and finally Alexander the Great (332 BC). The Egyptian Ptolemeans ruled until they were conquered by the Romans (30 BC) and emaciated by heavy Roman taxes. When the Arabs conquered Egypt (641 AD), Egypt was exhausted. But because the Nile has not yet been dried up, there is still room for further fulfilment of the prophecy of judgement against the kingdom of the world.

(ii) A prophecy of salvation (19:18-25). The prophecy of judgement of Egypt (19:1-17) is followed by a prophecy of salvation of Egypt (19:18-25). Egypt as representative of the kingdom of *the Gentile world will come to a knowledge of the true God. This is the other side of God’s sovereign will: that the LORD wants to gather a people for himself from the heathen nations that is united with his people from the nation of Israel. The LORD’s people consisting of the chosen believers during the Old Testament period will be continued in his people consisting of the chosen believers during the New Testament period! It is not for God too great to make nations, generations of people and individuals that seem to be far from him, objects of his mercy and grace!*

In the 2nd century BC many Jews lived in Egypt. Even the Old Testament was translated into Greek (called the Septuagint). In that day 5 cities of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the LORD Almighty. According to the Greek translation one of these cities will be called ‘the city of righteousness’. The historian Josephus related that in the second century BC Onias IV (the son of the Jewish high priest Onias III) fled from the Syrian king to Egypt and in about 160 BC built a temple for the Jews living in Egypt according to the measurements of the Jerusalem temple. He used Isaiah 19:19-20 to receive permission from the Egyptian king Ptolemy VI to build a temple (an altar) that stood till 72 AD. An obelisk (a monument) was also erected to point to the worship of the LORD in Egypt. Many Egyptians turned to the LORD and the LORD healed them. Thus the LORD made himself known to the Egyptians and they acknowledged and worshipped the LORD (19:18-22).

The end of this chapter prophesies that the deadly enmity between Egypt and Assyria in the days of Isaiah, that caused so much disaster to the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, will come to an end (19:23-25). *The kingdom of the world will come to an end and the Kingdom of God will prevail! “In that day (the day of salvation)” there will be a (symbolic) highway from Egypt running through Palestine to Assyria and Assyrians and Egyptians will meet one another in peace on this way and worship the True God together!*

⁶⁹ cf. Revelation 21:26

⁷⁰ Neferkare Shabaka, or Shabako was the third Kushite pharaoh of the 25th Dynasty of Egypt, who reigned from ca. 712 to 696 BC.

In that day Israel will be the third partner in this alliance and thus Israel reaches its highest purpose, namely, to be the mediator of God's blessing⁷¹ in the midst of the whole history of the world, here represented by Egypt and Assyria. In this blessing both Egypt and Assyria receive one of Israel's honorary names: 'people of the LORD', 'handiwork of the LORD' and 'inheritance/possession of the LORD'. The eye of the prophet Isaiah is on the final destination of God's plan and God's way (action), in which enmity and war makes way for God's Kingdom of peace that is rooted in knowing God personally (11:9) and walking in God's ways (2:2-4). This highway is an Old Testament type of 'destroying the dividing wall of hostility' between believers from among the Greeks and believers from among the Jews⁷².

Chapter 20. A prophecy against Egypt and Cush.

The prophecy is dated about 715 BC.

(i) The prophetic action of Isaiah (20:1-6). In 713 BC Ashdod (a city of the Philistines) rebelled against Assyria and relied on the help of Egypt-Cush. Hezekiah of Judah also leaned towards this anti-Assyrian alliance, so already a year earlier God commanded Isaiah to go around stripped naked and barefoot for 3 years (714-711 BC) as a prophetic sign and herald that Egyptian captives and Cushite exiles would be led away stripped and barefoot to Assyria. This sign was also meant for Egypt-Cush and Judah. 'Stripped' means without the outer coat and only with the undercoat made of rough camel's hair, a leather belt around the waist and sandals on the feet⁷³.

(ii) The fulfilment. The fact that Assyria captured Ashdod and not Jerusalem shows that Hezekiah had changed his mind. Later, Esarhaddon (in 670 BC) and Ashurbanipal (in 667 BC) conquered Egypt.

Chapter 21. Prophecies against Babylon, Edom and Arabia.

Like in Isaiah 13-14, the prophet is translated by the Spirit to a time in the future when the world power had passed on from Assyria to Babylon and Judah has been carried into exile to Babylon, to a time in which Isaiah no longer lived.

(i) Prophecy against Babylon (21:1-10). Judah had "been crushed on the threshing floor of Babel for some time (21:10). In a vision (21:1-5) the prophet sees (21:3) things that makes him tremble. While the leaders and officers in Babel feast (21:5), an invading army of Media and Elam lays siege against Babel, attacks and loots it. In another vision (21:6-10) the LORD commands the prophet (he hears)(21:10) to take a stand on the watchtower (lookout post) within the vision and the lookout announced the coming of a messenger with the message that Babylon had fallen and all her images lie shattered on the ground! This prophecy was fulfilled in 539 BC when Babylon fell.

(ii) Prophecy against Edom (21:11-12).

(iii) Prophecy against Arabia (21:13-17).

Chapter 22. A prophecy about Jerusalem and its officials.

(i) A sin not atoned for (22:1-14). *This prophecy describes the past and present rather than the future⁷⁴.* The LORD rebukes the attitude of Jerusalem after Hezekiah had made reinforcements against Sennacherib of Assyria destroying the cities of Judah a few years before 701 BC⁷⁵. Jerusalem was in a joyous tumult of revelry due to Assyria's first withdrawal. But Isaiah sees the reality, the bankruptcy of Jerusalem. He sees the LORD's day of frightening tumult and trampling and terror in which the leaders had fled and the Judean cities were in ruins. The citizens of the cities in Judah were not killed in battle, but were killed after surrendering to Assyria. He sees the breaches in the wall of Jerusalem and the houses torn down to strengthen the wall (22:3-11a). The citizens did not look (for help) to *the LORD who planned this disaster long ago*. They did not repent in sackcloth, but feasted, saying, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die"⁷⁶ (22:1-2,11b-13). Till their dying day their sin (of complacency, inaction) will not be atoned for (that is, their sin demands the death of the sinners)(22:14). We have no evidence that this prophecy was fulfilled. The LORD has the right and authority to withdraw an announcement of judgement⁷⁷. Hezekiah probably sought the LORD before this threat was executed!

(ii) Shebna deposed from office (22:14-19). A prophecy before Sennacherib's threat (36:3). He was the officer in charge of the palace. He chiselled a tomb for himself out of rock. The LORD will depose him from his office, he will be ousted from his position and banished from the land (rolled up in a tight ball and hurled into a large country of exile).

(iii) Eliakim inducted in this position of authority (22:20-25). *The LORD will invest his servant, Eliakim, with clothes of authority and place the (large wooden) key to the house of David on his shoulder. What he opens no one can shut and what he shuts no one can open (that is, he has extreme authority and power)⁷⁸. In this Eliakim is a type of Jesus Christ (22:20-23)*. But then the prophecy (22:24-25) takes a turn. The nepotism (favouritism to his family) of Eliakim led to his fall.

Chapter 23. A prophecy against Phoenicia (Tyre and Sidon).

This prophecy probably dates from before 701 BC. In 8th - 7th century BC. Assyria and Babylonia represent 'the kingdom of the world', Sidon and Tyre represent the same in the aspect of trade, especially by sea.

⁷¹ Genesis 12:2; Genesis 2:18

⁷² Ephesians 2:14-18

⁷³ 2 Kings 1:8; Mark 1:6

⁷⁴ cf. 2 Chronicles 32:2-23

⁷⁵ 2 Kings 18:13-16

⁷⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:32

⁷⁷ cf. Jeremiah 18:7-10, the book of Jonah

⁷⁸ cf. Revelation 3:7-8

This prophecy predicts the collapse of Tyre (23:1), Sidon (23:2), whole Phoenicia (23:11). Tyre was the marketplace of the nations (23:3), the fortress of the sea (23:4), a city of revelry (23:6). “*The LORD Almighty planned to bring all pride of glory low and to humble the renowned on earth*” (23:9). Tyre will be destroyed and forgotten for 70 years (23:15)(symbolical for the lifetime of a king). After 70 years Phoenicia will return to her hire as a prostitute and will ply her trade with all the unbelieving kingdoms on earth. But her profit and her earnings will be set apart for the LORD, because “Christ will be the heir of all things”⁷⁹.

SECTION 3. Isaiah 24-27. The end of the history of the world and the inauguration of the Kingdom of God.

This section (4 chapters) pictures the end of the kingdom of the world and the inauguration of the Kingdom of God. The judgements on the various countries in the previous section come together in this general judgement. The prophecy takes on an apocalyptic character. Just as parts of the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation, this section of the book of Isaiah is occupied with the last events.

Whether the prophecy takes the historical point of departure (the Assyrian period) or the ideal point of departure (the Babylonian period) is not clear, but chapter 27:6-13 is certainly the latter.

Chapter 24. Judgement and salvation in God's Kingdom is figurative of the last Judgement.

(i) Judgment (24:1-13). The LORD is going to devastate the earth and scatter its inhabitants. The earth is defiled by its people, because they have disobeyed the (moral, spiritual and ecological) laws, violated the statutes of God and broken the everlasting covenant (of God with Noah)(24:1-5). Therefore a curse (the LORD's wrath) consumes the earth. The people of the world must bear their guilt and suffer the consequences (burn up). Only few people will remain. The blame for this judgement lies with the fall of man into sin⁸⁰ and not with God (24:5-6)! All joy in the world comes to an end. The wine drinkers and merrymakers are stopped (24:7-9). Cities are left in ruin and desolation (abandonment). The destruction is like a beaten olive tree (no more olives left on the tree) or a harvested grapevine (no more grapes left on the vine) – only a remnant is left (24:10-13).

(ii) Salvation (24:14-16a) in the prophet's own time. The shout of joy from the west that is responded by the acclamation of the LORD in the east is caused by the defeat of Sennacherib (705-681 BC) in 701 BC by the angel (37:36-37)⁸¹.

(iii) Judgement (24:16b-20). The LORD's judgement is inescapable: those trying to escape, fall into pits and are caught in snares (24:18). The devastation is pictured as a shaking of the earth⁸². The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind; so heavy upon the earth is the guilt of mankind's rebellion. The creation was subject to frustration (meaninglessness)⁸³. The (old) earth falls – never to rise again⁸⁴ (24:19-20).

(iv) Salvation (24:21-23). In that day (at the inauguration of the Kingdom of God)(at the first coming of Jesus) the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above (the fallen/evil angels)⁸⁵ and the kings on the earth below⁸⁶. These demons contributed to the sinful development of mankind, especially their strife/aim to oppose the LORD. They will be herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon⁸⁷. Only after many days (at the second coming of Jesus) they will be released (that is, they will be 'looked after' in order to bring them to judgement before the Judge)⁸⁸ (24:21-22). The sun and moon⁸⁹ will make room for the New Rising Light: namely, the LORD reigning gloriously in the whole universe⁹⁰ (24:23) (in Old Testament terms: the LORD reigning on Mount Zion in Jerusalem).

Chapter 25. Song of praise - salvation in God's Kingdom is figurative of the new earth.

(i) The praise of the saved (25:1-5). Believers exalt God for his marvellous eternal plan (25:1). He reduced the fortified kingdom of the world (the foreigner's stronghold) to rubble (25:2). As a consequence the strong non-believers and ruthless nations are forced to capitulate to God (25:3). God's vulnerable (needy) people, however experience God as a shelter against the storm, a shade from the heat (25:4-5).

(ii) The song of the saved (25:6-8). The inaugurated kingship of God on mount Zion (24:23) is continued. On this mountain the LORD will prepare a feast for all nations. He will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples: not only the veil of ignorance when people repent and turn to the Lord⁹¹, but also the shroud of mourning due to the suffering under the kingdom of the world. He will swallow up death forever⁹². He will wipe away tears from all faces⁹³.

⁷⁹ Hebrews 1: 2; cf. Revelation 21:24

⁸⁰ Romans 5:12-19

⁸¹ 2 Chronicles 32:21

⁸² Hebrews 12:26-29

⁸³ Romans 8:20

⁸⁴ cf. Revelation 21:1

⁸⁵ cf. Daniel 10:13,20; Luke 10:18 (the binding of the Satan); Ephesians 6:12; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6

⁸⁶ cf. Ezekiel 38-39

⁸⁷ cf. Revelation 20:1-3

⁸⁸ cf. Revelation 20:10

⁸⁹ Joel 2:31

⁹⁰ cf. Revelation 20:11

⁹¹ cf. 2 Corinthians 3:14-16

⁹² cf. 1 Corinthians 15:54

⁹³ cf. Revelation 21:4

Thus he will remove the disgrace of his people (the chosen believing people of God) from all the earth. This work of salvation which began at the first coming of Christ (61:1-3) will be perfected at his second coming.

(iii) The rejoicing of the saved (25:9-12). The Kingdom of God is contrasted with Moab, which represents the proud kingdom of the world. The trust of believers in the LORD leads to rejoicing (25:9). But Moab will be trampled down as straw into manure. When Moab spreads his arms to swim out of this manure (his troubles), the LORD will bring him down again and stamp him into the manure! Thus, the LORD will again and again bring down the pride and clever actions of the people of the world. “I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and I will humble the pride of the ruthless” (13:11).

Chapter 26. The song and prayer of believers – the righteous people will enter the Kingdom of God⁹⁴.

(i) The song of the saved continued (26:1-6). In that day (the day of victory over the kingdom of the world) the rejoicing of the people of God about the completion of their salvation continues.

They are received into the strong city: (the heavenly) Jerusalem as a bulwark of salvation(26:1). Those on whom (God’s) righteousness has been imputed by faith⁹⁵ may enter this city (the heavenly Jerusalem) (26:2)⁹⁶. “Open the gates that the righteous nation may enter, the nation that keeps faith” (26:2). They experience undisturbed peace as long as their mind and faith remains steadfast in the LORD (26:3). The prophet urges them to keep on trusting in the LORD (their eternal Rock)(26:4). But the people of the kingdom of the world (the arrogant proud) are brought down in the dust and are trampled down by the feet of those they oppressed (26:5-6).

(ii) The prayer of the militant Church in the present time (26:7-19). The still living but oppressed believers prayerfully expect the coming judgement of unbelievers and hope for the future salvation/deliverance of believers (26:7-21). *The believers confess that although the path of the righteous is often rough, the LORD makes it level (so that the believers always reach their final destination)(26:7)!* As believers keep walking on it, they expect to know the LORD as he has revealed himself (his name). This is what they desire in their hearts (26:8).

The believers realise that unbelievers harden themselves in godlessness and unrighteousness⁹⁷. *So when God’s judgements come upon the earth, the wicked people of the world still do not learn righteousness⁹⁸ (26:9,21). Though grace is shown to the wicked, they still do not learn to do what is right, but rather go on doing evil (26:10)⁹⁹.* They do not see God’s uplifted hand (his actions, for example, the humbling of Assyria and his zeal for his own people). Believers pray, “May the LORD consume his enemies, because they deserve it” (26:11). The prophet acknowledges that everything the righteous people have accomplished, is what the LORD has done for them (26:12). The LORD punished these enemies (the Assyrian lords that ruled over them) and brought them to ruin. This means that their bodies return to dust and their spirits are not re-incarnated. They go to hell¹⁰⁰. The LORD wiped out all memory of them (26:13-14).

In contrast, the LORD’s people (God’s Israel) has not been terminated, but is enlarged: physically their borders have been extended (26:15) and spiritually the Kingdom of God is extended (cf. 27:6)! When the LORD disciplined them (made them suffer the oppression of the Assyrians), they could barely whisper a prayer and were like a woman only pregnant in appearance (giving birth to wind)(26:16-18). However, the life-giving dew of the LORD will resurrect the bodies of believers (cf. 25:8)¹⁰¹ (26:19).

(iii) The exhortation of the prophet (26:20-21). The LORD is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth (the kingdom of the world) for their sins. The people of God (the Kingdom of God) are exhorted to meanwhile hide in their inner rooms, until God’s wrath has passed by. This will only take a short while¹⁰², because the divine wrath does not need a long time to punish the godless and wicked people of the kingdom of the world. *The exposure and punishment of the kingdom of the world is an expression of God’s justice and patience, or in other words, an expression of his love for the righteous remnant. The bloodshed and evil of the kingdom of the world cannot and will not be concealed. It will be disclosed (26:21)!*

Chapter 27. The kingdom of the world will be punished, but the Kingdom of God blessed.

The LORD’s answer to the prayers of the believers. He announces the final judgment.

(i) The LORD will punish (slay) the kingdom of the world (27:1). The kingdom of the world is depicted as three chaotic water monsters: the Leviathan or ‘the gliding/fleeing monster’ (the Tigris representing the Assyrian world empire), the Leviathan or ‘the coiling/twisting monster’ (the Euphrates representing the Babylonian world empire) and ‘the sea monster’, a snake or dragon (often a figure for Upper Egypt, the rivers of Cush or Nile representing the Egyptian world empire)(18:1; 19:5-7).

(ii) The LORD will bless the Kingdom of God (27:2-5). His (chosen and believing) people will be ‘a fruitful vineyard’, which the LORD waters continually and guards day and night so that no one may harm it (27:2-3). Contrast the unbelievers in Israel who are called ‘a destroyed vineyard’, ‘a trampled wasteland’ overgrown with briars and thorns (5:5-6).

⁹⁴ The Kingdom of God is the Messianic or New Community, the New Testament Church.

⁹⁵ Romans 4:3

⁹⁶ cf. Hebrews 12:22-24; Galatians 4:24-26

⁹⁷ cf. Romans 1:18,25

⁹⁸ Ecclesiastes 8:11

⁹⁹ The Kingdom of God (worldwide Church) is still a mixed community of genuine believers and nominal believers.

¹⁰⁰ Ecclesiastes 9:6

¹⁰¹ 1 Corinthians 15:54

¹⁰² cf. Matthew 24:21-22

He himself will fight against the godless (briers and thorns in the still mixed Kingdom) unless they repent and make peace with God (27:4-5).

(iii) The future extension of the Kingdom of God (27:6-13). This prophecy takes the ideal point of departure (namely, in the Babylonian period). In the future the Israel of God¹⁰³ “will bud and blossom and fill all the earth with fruit”. She will “will take root below and bear fruit above” (37:31-32)¹⁰⁴ and “birds of every kind (e.g. people of all nations) will nest in it and find shelter in it”¹⁰⁵. In the future the Kingdom of God will extend over the whole world (27:6). The LORD used the exile to Assyria and Babylonia to save his people and to lead them to repentance (a desire to return)¹⁰⁶. At this time in salvation history, her exile to Babylon led to the smashing of her idolatrous incense altars and Ashera poles and thus the removal of her sins. The exile made atonement for her sins, that is, satisfied the LORD’s holy and righteous requirement to punish wickedness, pacified his holy anger against sin and reconciled his people to him¹⁰⁷ (37:7-9).

During the exile the LORD had no compassion on Israel and made Jerusalem desolate, because the people were without understanding¹⁰⁸ (17:10-11). Nevertheless, ‘in that day’, the day of salvation, the LORD’s programme of salvation will be accomplished. The LORD will gather up all his people still living in the Promised Land (from Wadi of Egypt to the Euphrates) one by one. And also bring all his people living in exile in Assyria and Egypt together to Jerusalem by a great trumpet sound where they all will worship the LORD (27:12-13; cf. 2:2-4; 11:10-16). “The nation of Jacob that will take root again, the Israel that will bud and blossom and fill the earth with fruit” again is the Messianic Kingdom, the New Testament Church, the fulfilment of what God destined the Old Testament Israel to be! The Church is ‘the Israel of God’ in its highest and most extended sense!

SECTION 4. Isaiah 28-33.

Isaiah’s ministry under Hezekiah, especially concerning the Kingdom of God, the New Community.

This section (6 chapters) is from Isaiah’s (and king Hezekiah’s) own time, particularly during 705-701 B.C., the period of change from the Assyrian ruler Sargon to Sennacherib, accompanied by freedom movements among the submissive nations. See the warnings against an alliance with Egypt (the Ethiopian dynasty of Tirhakah between 704-662 BC)(30:1-12; 31:1-2).

Chapter 28. The new community has Christ as Foundation / Cornerstone.

An old prophecy about the destruction of Samaria/Northern Israel (before its siege in 725 BC) when it was still living in decadent happiness. It is followed by a later prophecy warning Judah/Southern Israel that she will suffer a similar judgement. In sin and judgement Israel and Judah are united.

(i) Two kinds of beauty: The fading wreath (Samaria) or the glorious crown (the LORD) (28:1-6). Samaria, the pride of drunkards, is going to be flattened like a hailstorm by the Assyrian army. Their human wreath of pride is going to be trampled underfoot and swallowed up as an early fig, ripe before the harvest (28:1-4). In that day (the Messianic Age) the LORD Almighty will be a glorious crown, a divine beautiful wreath for the (chosen and believing) remnant of his people (28:5). He will be a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgement, a source of strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate (28:6). This prophecy was fulfilled in the defeat of Samaria (722 BC).

(ii) Two kinds of shelter: The anti-Assyrian coalition or the precious cornerstone (28:7-22). This is a prophecy against Judah’s aristocratic spiritual leaders (drunken prophets when seeing visions and staggering priests when rendering decisions)(28:7-8). The people mock the fact that Jerusalem has not fallen like Samaria. They mimic the leaders’ teachings or explanations as given to infants: “do this, do that” (28:9-10). Therefore the LORD will speak enforced laws: “do this, do that” to this people through foreigners with strange languages (Assyrians). Judah rejected the Lord’s place of Rest (Canaan), so they will be snared and captured in exile (28:11-13). The prophecy speaks against Judah’s political leaders (scoffing rulers who boast about their unholy alliance with the anti-Assyrian coalition/Egypt)(28:14). “We have made a covenant with death (the underworld) and made lies and falsehood our refuge (hiding place)(possibly by pretending to be submissive to the Assyrian army that sweeps by)(28:15)!

The LORD himself is the best shelter. He will lay a precious Cornerstone in Zion for the royal house of David, initially the Old Testament Hezekiah, but ultimately the New Testament Messiah, Jesus Christ. He says, “See, I lay in Zion a tested (approved) stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation.” (He is “a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame”¹⁰⁹). The LORD’s work of grace unlocks the way of salvation: “the one who trusts (7:9) in him (the Messiah) will never be dismayed” (28:16). God’s prerequisite/demand of righteousness will be the measuring line and plumbline that build this genuine shelter (Zion). Hail and water will sweep away the shelter (refuge) of lies. When the overwhelming scourge (the Assyrian army) sweeps by, those who made an alliance with Egypt will be beaten down, blow after blow (28:17-18). Understanding this message will bring sheer terror (to Judah’s leaders) (28:19). The anti-Assyrian coalition will lead to utter disillusionment: it is “like a bed too short to stretch out on and a blanket too narrow to wrap around one” (28:20).

¹⁰³ Romans 9:6; Galatians 6:14-16

¹⁰⁴ cf. Colossians 2:7

¹⁰⁵ Ezekiel 17:23; Matthew 13:32

¹⁰⁶ Hosea 2:7

¹⁰⁷ cf. Isaiah 40:2

¹⁰⁸ Hosea 4:6

¹⁰⁹ Romans 9:33; 1 Peter 2:6-8; cf. Matthew 21:42-44; Ephesians 2:20

The LORD will rise up as the Great Opponent as he did when David defeated the Philistines at Perazim and Gibeon¹¹⁰. The LORD will execute his plan (his strange work, his alien task) irrevocably! He decreed destruction against the whole land (of Judah). Therefore, the prophet exhorts Judah's aristocratic spiritual leaders to stop their mocking, boasting and lying (28:21-22)!

(iii) Two purposes in God's wisdom: On the one hand to plough and thresh (to judge). On the other hand to sow and plant (to save) (28:23-29). The LORD works as a farmer with a clear plan: he prepares the soil and plants/sows in different times and ways. The LORD instructs and teaches the farmer the right way (28:26). *With his judgements of Israel and Judah he breaks up the soil of the life of the Old Testament nation in order to prepare it for a better future: namely, the sowing (saving) of a spiritual remnant and establishing the new community, the Kingdom of God in the New Testament.*

Chapter 29. The new community will consist of people who know and who are transformed.

(i) Besieged Jerusalem is liberated by the sudden intervention of the LORD (29:1-8). 'Altar hearth'¹¹¹ (burnt offerings were made on it and blood was sprinkled upon it) sounds like 'Ariel' and is a reference to Jerusalem. Judah's people carry on with their traditional cycle of festivals (feasting) and offerings (29:1). But the city will be encircled and besieged by the Assyrian army (29:2-3). The people will writhe in fear and their voices will become ghostlike whispers (29:4). The LORD will suddenly intervene like a thunderstorm, earthquake, tempest and firestorm and the Assyrian army consisting of hordes of different nations will attack Jerusalem, but (suddenly) disappear like a dream/vision in the night (29:5-8). This prophecy was fulfilled in Isaiah 37:36.

(ii) In the present Judah's leaders remain spiritually blind (29:9-16). The LORD shut the eyes and minds of Judah's prophets and seers (spiritual and political leaders). *The LORD's vision (revelation) remains like a sealed Book/Scroll to them so that the decrees of his eternal plan remain sealed. (It cannot be revealed, executed or even known during the Old Testament period. It is revealed only after Christ's completed work of salvation and at the enthronement of Jesus Christ in the New Testament period¹¹²)* (29:9-12). The merely outward religion of the nominal Jewish believers consists of rules made up by men, so that people worship the LORD with lips and not with the heart. Human wisdom will perish and human intelligence will vanish (29:13-14)! These leaders think they can hide their plans (their secret coalition with Egypt) from the LORD (cf. 30:1-2). They think that they can turn things upside down as if the clay (man) can teach the potter (God)(29:15-16).

(iii) *But in the future things will change so that the LORD's people will gain understanding and accept instruction (29:17-24). In that day (the day of victory over the kingdom of the world in the Messianic Age or New Testament period), the deaf will hear (and understand) the words of the Scroll and the eyes of the blind will see (things as the LORD sees them)¹¹³. The humble and needy will rejoice in the LORD¹¹⁴, but the ruthless mockers and evil lawyers, who deprive the innocent of justice, will be cut down (29:17-21). The redeemed believers, that is the LORD's people, will acknowledge the holiness of the LORD, stand in awe of the LORD, gain understanding and accept instruction (29:22-24).*

Chapter 30. The old community of Israel depended on the kingdom of the world.

(i) Judah's dependence on Egypt's help is utterly useless (30:1-7). *Woe to (God's) obstinate children, to those who carry out plans that are not the LORD's, forming an alliance (with people of the kingdom of the world), but not by the LORD's Spirit, heaping up sin upon sin, who go down to Egypt without consulting the LORD.* Pharaoh's protection and Egypt's shade only bring shame and disgrace. The people of Egypt are useless and bring neither help nor advantage (to the people of God) ... In vain the envoys of Judah carry treasures on donkeys and camels to that unprofitable nation. The LORD calls Egypt 'Rahab' (the Do Nothing), that is, like the prostitute in Joshua 2:1 (30:7). When Israel consulted Egypt and formed an alliance against Assyria, *her sin became to her like the walls of Jericho that suddenly collapse¹¹⁵(30:12-14)!*

(ii) The everlasting witness that Judah is a rebellious people (30:8-14). *Write on a tablet, inscribe on a scroll that it may be an everlasting witness for the days to come that these people (Israel) is a rebellious people, deceitful children, unwilling to listen to the LORD's instruction (30:8-9). The Israelites say to the seers (the prophets) to give them visions of pleasant things (things they want to hear)¹¹⁶, even if it is prophesying illusions and lies¹¹⁷, but to stop confronting them with the Holy One of Israel¹¹⁸ (30:10-11).* Therefore the LORD says, "Because these people reject this message and depend on deceit¹¹⁹, their sin will become to them like a bulging and cracked wall that suddenly collapses. It will shatter in pieces so that not even a useful fragment (potsherd) will be found (among the rubble) (30:12-14).

(iii) The promise of salvation, grace, answered prayers, guidance, renewal and abundance of the land (30:15-26). *Only in repentance and trust there is salvation and strength* (30:15). But the Israelites say that they will rather flee away from the LORD instead of staying with the LORD. So the LORD says that a thousand Israelites will flee at the threat of just one (Assyrian) until only a remnant of Israelites remain (cf. 1:9)(30:16-17).

¹¹⁰ 2 Samuel 5:20

¹¹¹ Ezekiel 43:15

¹¹² cf. Revelation 5:1-10

¹¹³ 2 Corinthians 3:14-16

¹¹⁴ cf. Matthew 11:4-5

¹¹⁵ Joshua 6:20

¹¹⁶ cf. 2 Timothy 4:3

¹¹⁷ cf. modern 'fake news' proclaimed by presidents of prominent countries

¹¹⁸ cf. modern prohibition of possessing, preaching or teaching the Bible in communist and Islamic countries!

¹¹⁹ Or fake news

Nevertheless, *the LORD longs to be gracious to his people. He is compassionate and does justice to those who wait for him (the remnant)*(30:18). When those who live in Zion (representing the heavenly Jerusalem or the Kingdom of the LORD) cry for help, he will answer as soon as he hears (30:19). Although the LORD gives them adversity and affliction (which they deserve), *they will see their teachers (who teach them the way of the LORD) or: (they will see the Teacher, the future Messiah)! His voice behind them will teach them to turn to the right or left on the way they must walk*¹²⁰. They will discard their idols (30:20-22). And the LORD will renew their land (the earth), the sunlight will be seven times brighter and he will bind their bruises and heal their wounds¹²¹ (30:23-26).

(iv) The threat of judgement to the nations (the kingdom of the world)(30:27-33). ‘The Name of the LORD’ is the LORD himself just as he has revealed himself (in the Bible and not as people imagine him to be) (30:27)! The coming of the LORD unto judgement is depicted in anthropomorphic (human) manner: his lips are full of wrath, his tongue is a consuming fire, his breath a rushing torrent rising up to the neck, his majestic voice booming and his arm crashing down. He will shake the nations¹²² in the sieve of destruction (30:28). He comes like a thunderstorm with cloudbursts and hail shattering Assyria (30:30-31), like a stream of burning sulphur (lava) setting Tophet (a reference to hell) ablaze. Tophet was the place of burning dead bodies as well as living children to the idol Molech¹²³ (30:33).

Chapter 31. The old community will fall, but the new community will return to God and be shielded by God.

(i) The old community (carnal Israel)¹²⁴ turns to man (flesh) for help (31:1-3). *Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, rely on horses, trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not seek the help of the LORD* (31:1). The politicians boast about their wisdom in diplomacy, but the LORD possesses a much higher wisdom. Their calculations will fail, but his plans will always be fulfilled and his words are never taken back (31:2). The Egyptians *are men and not God, their horses are flesh and not spirit*¹²⁵. The helpers (Egypt) will stumble and those helped (Israel) will fall (31:3).

(ii) The new community (God’s Israel)¹²⁶ turns to God for help (31:4-9). As the lion is not disturbed by the clamour of the band of shepherds (trying to scare it away), the LORD Almighty will come down to do battle on Mount Zion, *pass over*¹²⁷ Jerusalem (here a symbol of the believing remnant in Israel) (cf. 4:3; 11:9) and rescue and shield it (31:4-5). In the day the believing remnant returns (from exile), they will reject their handmade idols (31:6-7). Assyria will fall by the sword that is not of man¹²⁸; their soldiers will be put to forced labour, their commanders will panic, and the LORD will become the consuming Fire¹²⁹ for the thorns and briars (of the kingdom of the world) (cf. 10:17; 30:33) (31:4-8).

Chapter 32. The new community of righteousness and peace begins with the outpouring of the Spirit.

*This chapter describes an even more glorious future view (vista), namely, the new community will be a Kingdom of righteousness and peace (cf. 11:4,9)*¹³⁰.

(i) The Messianic Kingdom is contrasted with the kingdom of the world (32:1-8). *The Kingdom of the King (the Messiah) (9:6-7; 11:1-5) is contrasted with the violent government of Assyria and the corrupt government of Israel (1:17,23; 3:12-15; 5:7-8,12,18,20,23; 10:1-2). The prophecy points to the Messianic Era (the New Testament period), though less clear than chapter 9 and 11 (32:1). Each believer in the Messianic Kingdom will be “like streams of water in the desert”¹³¹ and “like the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land”, “a protector against injustice and violence”¹³² (32:2). There will be a great transformation in what people see, hear, think, speak and do. The following will cease: spiritual blindness and deafness (32:3), rash conclusions and stammering opinions (32:4), fools spreading error (false teachings and fake news) concerning the LORD¹³³; the merciless withholding food and water from the hungry and thirsty (32:6) and the wicked pretending to be righteous (32:7-8).*

(ii) Judgement against the affluent women in the kingdom of the world (32:9-14). Possibly a reference to the revelry (cf. 29:1) of affluent women in Jerusalem (cf. 3:16)¹³⁴ at the grape harvest (wine) and harvest of fruit during the Feast of Tabernacles (32:9-10). They are exhorted to strip their clothes and put on sackcloth around their waists and beat their breasts as a sign of mourning (32:11-12), because within a year the fruitful land (of Palestine) will be overgrown with thorns and briars. The houses of merriment and revelry of the affluent living on the fortress-hill (Ophel in southern Jerusalem) will be abandoned/deserted, and become ‘forever’ (an indetermined period) a wasteland for animals to graze (32:13-14). This is certainly fulfilled in people who die without repenting. “Till your dying day this sin will not be atoned for (cf. 22:14).” It is fulfilled again and again in the destruction caused in Israel by the Assyrians of Sennacherib and later by the Babylonians and the Romans (cf. 5:14,17; 7:20-25). *The word ‘forever’ in verse 14 has a limited sense!*

¹²⁰ cf. Psalm 32:8

¹²¹ cf. Revelation 21:4

¹²² Hebrews 12:26-29

¹²³ 2 Kings 23:10

¹²⁴ 1 Corinthians 10:18. The Jews who do not believe and are disobedient (Hebrews 4:2,6)

¹²⁵ 2 Chronicles 32:8; Ecclesiastes 3:19-21; 12:7; Isaiah 40:7; Ezekiel 37:8; Habakkuk 2:19

¹²⁶ Galatians 6:14-16. The believing remnant in Israel as well as believers from the Gentile nations.

¹²⁷ cf. Exodus 12:23

¹²⁸ cf. Isaiah 37:36

¹²⁹ Hebrews 12:29

¹³⁰ Psalm 72:2-8

¹³¹ cf. John 7:37-39

¹³² like the present Middle East situation

¹³³ cf. Psalm 14:1

¹³⁴ Amos 4:1

(iii) Salvation for the people in the Kingdom of God (32:15-20). *The Messianic Kingdom begins with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit from on high*¹³⁵ (32:15). *The Spirit rests in all his fulness on the Messiah (11:2) and will be poured out on the believing remnant*¹³⁶, causing transformation in nature, transformation in society (32:15) and transformation in people in a moral-religious sense: righteousness of God, peace with God and confidence in God (cf. wisdom, understanding, fear of the LORD) (11:2).

The people of the LORD will live in peaceful and secure places, but the kingdom of the world is defeated: the Assyrian land is flattened and their capital is levelled (32:18-19). *How blessed are the remnant who inherit the Kingdom of God, the earth*¹³⁷ and the new earth, the final home of righteousness¹³⁸.

Chapter 33. The stability (foundation) of the new community is the LORD himself and his righteousness.

(i) Sennacherib of Assyria, the traitor, broke his treaty with Hezekiah of Judah (33:1-6). In Isaiah, the judgment of Judah's sin (their coalition with Egypt against Assyria) becomes more the background and the judgment of Assyria's sin (betraying, attacking and destroying Judah) becomes more the foreground. What Assyria did to others (betrayal and destruction) will be done to her (37:36-38)(33:1)! Isaiah identifies himself with his people: "Be *our* strength every morning and *our* salvation in time of distress" (33:2). At the thunder of the LORD's voice, the different nations that compose the Assyrian army will scatter (33:3). The Judeans will gather up their thrown away clothes, baggage and weapons as they flee (33:4). More than plunder, the LORD will fill Zion with justice and righteousness (33:5). *Insecurity and instability will come to an end, because the LORD himself will be the sure foundation (stability) of their times (their circumstances and their destiny)(cf. "my times are in your hands")*¹³⁹. *The key to this treasure is to trust (fear) the LORD (33:6).*

(ii) The Avenger of Judah comes into action (33:7-13). Judah's envoys bringing the tribute that would have secured peace¹⁴⁰ weep bitterly due to the Assyrians breaking the treaty (33:7-8). Travellers desert the highways along which the marauding gangs of Assyria plunder. The whole land mourns: that is the beautiful forests of Lebanon, the oak trees on Bashan (Golan heights), the fruitful and flowery plain of Sharon (between the Carmel and to the sea), and the Arabah (the sandy desert south of the Dead Sea)(33:8-9). The LORD says that he will come into action (33:10). The Assyrians conceive chaff, give birth to straw and their blazing (blowing) anger sets them ablaze and consumes them like cut thornbushes. They reap what they sow¹⁴¹ (33:11-12). Let even people that are far away hear and acknowledge the power of the LORD (33:13).

(iii) The significance of these events to Jerusalem (Zion) (33:14-24). The sinners in Zion who excluded the LORD from their thinking will be terrified and say to one another, "Who can dwell with the consuming fire, the everlasting burning¹⁴² (the LORD) (33:14)?" Dwelling with the LORD is however possible for the righteous believer in his walk and in his talk¹⁴³. The righteous believer rejects extortion, bribes and plotting murder. He will dwell in safety with plenty of bread and water (33:14-16). Because at that time Judah had shrunken to only the city of Jerusalem, the eye of the righteous believer will see the king in his beauty, possibly king Hezekiah and his restored land that stretches afar (33:17). He will no more see those arrogant Assyrian officials with their strange language, the recorder of revenue and the inspector of the fortress (33:18-19). *The righteous believers will see the Jerusalem of the Messianic Era like a tent which stakes will never be pulled up and which ropes will never be broken (33:20), a place of rivers and streams*¹⁴⁴, with no more proud warships and galleys of slaves (33:21).

In this future eternal dispensation the LORD will be the Judge, Lawgiver and King, the One who will save his people (33:22). The mighty Assyrian Empire (representing the kingdom of the world) is pictured as the wreck of a giant warship, its rigging, mast and sail in tatters, with the saved Judeans plundering its spoils (33:23). *In the New Jerusalem on the new earth all sickness will be healed*¹⁴⁵ and all sins will be forgiven (33:24).

SECTION 5. Isaiah 34-35.

The last things, especially the future glory of God's people.

This section (2 chapters) forms a conclusion to chapters 28-33, just as chapters 24-27 form a conclusion to chapters 13-23. It speaks of two most important events: the Last Judgement and the Renewal of All Things.

Chapter 34. The judgment of the nations is figurative of the Last Judgement.

(i) The Final Judgement (34:1-4). The LORD is angry with all the nations (here a symbol of the kingdom of the world). His wrath is upon all their armies. He will totally destroy them! Thus, warring nations and terrorists be warned (34:1-2)!

¹³⁵ cf. Ezekiel 36:24-28; Acts 2:1-5

¹³⁶ Ezekiel 36:27

¹³⁷ Matthew 5:5

¹³⁸ 2 Peter 3:13

¹³⁹ Psalm 31:15

¹⁴⁰ 2 Kings 18:3-16

¹⁴¹ Galatians 6:7-8

¹⁴² cf. Hebrews 12:29

¹⁴³ Psalm 15:1-5; 24:3-6

¹⁴⁴ cf. Revelation 22:1-3

¹⁴⁵ cf. Revelation 22:2-4

The judgement affects both humans (the enemies of God) as well as the creation/nature (the stars). Dead bodies will send up a stench and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll¹⁴⁶, all the stars of the heavens will dissolve, or with another image, fall like withered leaves from the vine or like shrivelled figs from the fig tree (34:4)¹⁴⁷.

(ii) The judgement of Edom is a precursor (34:5-17). The judgement of Edom points to the Last Judgement. Edom (descendants of Esau) had denied Israel (descendants of Jacob) passage through their land¹⁴⁸. Therefore the LORD chose Jacob and not Esau, rebuilt Israel after the fall of Jerusalem but left Edom destroyed¹⁴⁹. The great slaughter of Edom will be like a sacrifice (34:6-7).

The LORD has a day of vengeance (retribution) to uphold the cause of Zion (the new community)(34:8). Edom's streams and land will turn into burning pitch (asphalt). Revelation says, "They will be tormented with burning sulphur and the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever"¹⁵⁰. It will become a haunt for wild birds¹⁵¹ (34:9-11).

God will stretch out over Edom the measuring line of desolation (Hebrew: tohu) and the plumb line of chaos (Hebrew: bohu)(cf. the words 'empty' and 'formless' at the creation)¹⁵² (34:11). Thorns, nettles and brambles will overrun the country and it will become a haunt for wild animals (34:13-15). This has been ordered in the scroll of the LORD (the document in which this prophecy has been recorded) as a proof and witness that the words of the LORD will be fulfilled (34:16a). The Spirit of the LORD will gather his people together and give to them their eternal inheritance (34:16b-17).

Chapter 35. The salvation of the redeemed from exile is figurative of the Renewal of all Things.

(i) The salvation from exile is figurative of the renewal of all things (35:1-4). In contrast to the terrible destruction of Edom which points to the last Judgement, Zion's return from the (Babylonian) exile points to the renewal of all things.

The desert regions of the Holy Land will blossom and the glorious mountains of the Lebanon and Carmel and the plain of Sharon will reflect the glory of the LORD (35:1-2). Many people oppressed in exile had lost hope, their hands had become feeble and their knees weak due to fear. The prophecy exhorts them to see the coming salvation of the LORD, to strengthen their hands and steady their knees and trust the LORD who is coming to bring retribution to their oppressors and save his people (cf. 34:8)(35:3-4).

(ii) The Messianic Era is figurative of the renewal of all things (35:5-10). Matthew 11:4-5 says, "What you see and hear: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." Acts 26:18 says, "I am sending you to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." The physical healing of the blind, the deaf, the lame and the mute (35:5-6) is a symbol of spiritual healing as well as the renewal of the nature in creation: the streams in the desert, the pools in the sand dunes, the springs in dry ground and the growth of grass, reeds and papyrus (35:6-7)! There will (symbolically) be a Highway of Holiness on which only the redeemed and clean will walk¹⁵³ and the ransomed from exile (slavery) by the LORD will return (cf. 11:16). They will enter the heavenly Jerusalem (the new community) with singing and everlasting joy! All sorrow and sighing will flee away (35:8-10)¹⁵⁴. "No longer will there be any curse!¹⁵⁵"

SECTION 6. Isaiah 36-39.

Conflict between Sennacherib and Hezekiah. The destruction of Assyria.

The Old Babylonian Empire. Hammurabi was the sixth king of the Amorite First Dynasty of Babylon and ruled Babylon from 1792-1750 BC. He is famous for his surviving set of laws, which were inscribed on a stela in Babylon's temple of Marduk.

The New Babylonian Empire. One Merodach-Baladan appeared during the time of Sargon, made a covenant with Elam, set other Aramaic tribes against Assyria and assumed the kingship of Babylon in 721 BC. However, Sargon conquered him in 709 BC and reigned over Babylon. In 703 BC the same or another Merodach-Baladan appeared and with the help of Elam and Aramaic tribes became king in Babylon. However, within 9 months in 702 BC Sennacherib conquered him. Later Nabopolassar (625-604 BC) and Nebuchadnezzar (604-562 BC) established the New Babylonian (Chaldean) Empire.

Sennacherib's own report says that he laid siege against Judah's fortified cities (701 BC), pounded them with battering-rams, captured more than 200,000 men and women and an uncountable number of horses, donkeys, camels, cattle and sheep as loot. He locked Hezekiah in Jerusalem as a bird in a cage, built ramparts against Jerusalem's walls and punished anyone coming out of the gates.

King Hezekiah of Judah reigned under guardianship from 726-714 BC, he reigned alone from 713-696 BC and reigned with Manasseh from 695-685 BC. He died in 685 BC.

¹⁴⁶ cf. Revelation 6:14

¹⁴⁷ Matthew 24:29

¹⁴⁸ Numbers 20:14-21

¹⁴⁹ Malachi 1:2-5; Romans 9:13

¹⁵⁰ Revelation 14:10-11; 19:3

¹⁵¹ Revelation 18:2

¹⁵² Genesis 1:2

¹⁵³ Revelation 21:27

¹⁵⁴ Revelation 21:4

¹⁵⁵ Revelation 22:3

Chapter 36. The Assyrians threaten Jerusalem.

(i) The pride, ridicule and threat of the Assyrians (36:1-20). In 701 BC Sennacherib attacked the fortified cities of Judah and captured them (36:1). The field commander of the Assyrians met the Judean delegation, Eliakim the administrator of the palace, Shebna the secretary and Joah the recorder, at the aqueduct of the Upper Pool (36:2-3). He taunted the LORD in the Hebrew language instead of Aramaic so that the people sitting on the wall would understand, “You are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of staff which pierces a man’s hand and wounds him if he leans on it (36:6) ... Come out to me and everyone will eat, instead of their own filth and drink their own urine, from his own vine and fig tree and drink water from his own cistern (all empty promises) until you are exiled to a similar land of bread and vineyards (36:12,16-17)... Who of all the gods of these countries has been able to save his land from me? (36:20)”

(ii) The response of the Judeans (36:21-22). *But the people remained silent* (26:21). The Judean delegation reported this to king Hezekiah in torn clothes.

Chapter 37. God delivers Jerusalem from the Assyrians.

(i) The withdrawal of the Assyrian army (37:1-13)¹⁵⁶. Then the Judean delegation accompanied by the leading priests reported Hezekiah’s distress to the prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, in sackcloth. Isaiah said that the LORD said, “Do not be afraid of what you have heard. I am going to put a spirit in him so that when he hears a certain report, he will return to his country, and there I will have him cut down with the sword” (37:6-7). The field commander withdrew when he heard that Sennacherib had received a report that Tirhakah, king of Egypt, was marching out against him and had left Lachish. Sennacherib sent a message to Hezekiah that he was going to destroy Judah and Jerusalem completely (37:9-11).

(ii) The prayer of Hezekiah (37:14-20)¹⁵⁷. Hezekiah spread the letter with the threat out before the LORD in the temple, praying: “The Assyrian kings have laid waste all these peoples and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them. For they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands. Deliver us so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God”.

(iii) The answer of the LORD (37:21-35)¹⁵⁸. The LORD said against Sennacherib, “Who is it you have insulted, blasphemed and proudly raised your voice? ... *Long ago I (the LORD) ordained and planned (what would happen) and now I have brought it to pass* (37:23-26). ... I know where you stay and when you come and go and how you rage against me (37:28). Because of your insolence I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will make you return by the way you came” (37:28-29).

God gave a sign to Hezekiah: “This year you will eat what grows by itself, and the second year what springs from that (a reference to two lost harvests). But in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit. *Once more a remnant of the house of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above. For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors (a prophecy referring to the New Testament period spread of the Gospel and emergence of the Church from Jerusalem).* The zeal of the LORD will accomplish this” (37:30-32).” ... “I will defend this city and save it for my sake and for the sake of David, my servant (37:35).”

(iv) The defeat of the Assyrian army (37:36-38). Then the Angel of the LORD (the manifestation of Jesus Christ during the Old Testament period) went out and put to death 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp. ... Sennacherib broke camp, withdrew to Nineveh, where two of his sons murdered him while he was worshipping his god Nisroch in his temple. His other son, Esarhaddon, succeeded him.

Chapter 38. The LORD extends Hezekiah’s life.

(i) Hezekiah’s prayer and the LORD’s answer (38:1-8). Hezekiah became ill to the point of death. Isaiah said, “Put your house in order, because you are going to die” (38:1) Hezekiah wept and prayed, “Remember, O LORD, how I walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes (38:3).” The LORD heard his prayer and saw his tears. He added 15 years to his life. The LORD’s sign (not requested, but promised) to Hezekiah is: “I will make the shadow cast by the sun go back the ten steps it has gone down on the stairway of Ahaz (i.e. the LORD will reverse time, something no one except the Creator can do!) (38:8).

(ii) Hezekiah’s song after his recovery about the benefit of sickness and suffering (37:9-22). “*A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah after his illness and recovery ...*” (38:9) proves that *there is no reason why in the same way more written pieces of other authors may have been added to the Book of Isaiah, provided that we accept that these authors were also inspired by the Holy Spirit and their inclusion into the Book of Isaiah was guided by the Holy Spirit.*

“Surely. It was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back (38:17). For the grave cannot praise you, ... but the living praise you ... and fathers tell their children about your faithfulness (38:18-19). ... We will sing with stringed instruments in the temple all the days of our life.”

¹⁵⁶ 2 Kings 19:1-13

¹⁵⁷ 2 Kings 19:14-19

¹⁵⁸ 2 Kings 19:20-37

Chapter 39. The exile to Babylon prophesied.

- (i) The show-off (39:1-2). The king of Babylon, Merodach-Baladan, sent a letter to Hezekiah about his illness and recovery. Hezekiah received his envoys and showed them what was in his storehouses and kingdom.
- (ii) Isaiah rebuked Hezekiah (39:3-8). “The time will surely come when all this will be carried off to Babylon, including some of your relatives, who will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

PART 2. CHAPTERS 40-66. THE BABYLONIAN PERIOD (586-516 BC)

The historical point of view believes the author of chapter 40-66 is another Isaiah.

When one holds the view that the author of Isaiah 40-66 is another person than the author of Isaiah 1-39, the so-called Deutero-Isaiah (a second Isaiah) or that the author of Isaiah 55-66 is Trito-Isaiah (a third Isaiah), then part two speaks about events and conditions after the lifetime of Isaiah (740-680 BC). The prophet speaks about the exile of the Jews to Babylon (586-516 BC), about the founder of the Persian Empire, Cyrus the Great (who ruled from 559-530 BC), the conquering of Babylon (539 BC) and the return of the Jews from exile (538 BC) and the subsequent rebuilding of Jerusalem.

The prophet speaks of the Assyrian Period as already past (52:4). The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (51:3; 52:9) and the exiles in Babylon (42:22,24) are regarded as the existing reality, but the liberation from exile from Babylon is still a predicted future. The period of exile was already long and closer to its end (40:2; 42:14; 43:22-24). The prophet’s audience are Jews living in the last part of the exile and he addresses their weariness and complaints (40:27,29; 55:1) and warns them not to let the day of liberation go by unnoticed (55:6-7).

In Isaiah 40-48 king Cyrus is regarded as a known conqueror (41:2-7,25). Thus the historical point of view lies between the beginning of the victories of Cyrus (already a fact) and his conquering of Babel (still a prediction). Isaiah 49-55 seems to be later, when Babel had been conquered, but the exiles had not yet been liberated. While some prophecies are from the past, others are in the present. “From now on I will tell you of new things, of hidden things unknown to you (namely the liberation of Israel by Cyrus). They are created now and not long ago; you have not heard of them before today” (48:6-7).

However, the liberation of God’s people from slavery in exile was a supernatural event! The prophecies about the coming Messiah proves the supernatural character of the Book.

The ideal point of view believes the author of chapter 40-66 is the same as the author of chapter 1-39.

When one holds to the conviction that the author of Isaiah 40-66 is the same as the author of Isaiah 1-39, then the Holy Spirit of prophecy transferred the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 40-66 into the time of the exile (586-516 BC), which is his point of departure. The Spirit enabled Isaiah not only to see, hear and predict/foretell these future events, but also to empathize with the life, struggles and grief of the exiles in that distant future!

Isaiah 13 in part 1 proves that Isaiah wrote Babylonian prophecies that have their point of departure not in the time the prophet lived (the Assyrian Period), but in the time when the Babylonian Empire had taken over the reign from the Assyrian Empire and Judah had been carried into exile (the Babylonian Period)!

The visit of the Babylonian delegation in Isaiah 39 could have been the occasion that gave rise to the Spirit giving new revelations to Isaiah regarding the Babylonian Period.

According to Jewish tradition the prophet Isaiah lived longer than Hezekiah (713-685 BC) and was martyred during the reign of Manasseh (684-641 BC). Manasseh is not mentioned in the introduction (1:1), because Isaiah probably no longer prophesied publicly, but prophesied only within his small circle of disciples (8:16) and wrote his prophecies down to be preserved for later generations.

Because the four prophecies about the Servant of the LORD (42:1-7; 49:1-9a; 50:4-9; 52:13 – 53:12) take the Babylonian exile as point of departure, they strengthen the prophet’s ideal point of view.

SECTION 7. Isaiah 40:1 - 49:13.

The liberation from Babel and the Servant of the LORD.

In this section the contrast between the LORD and the idols dominates. The main content is about the action of Cyrus, the invasion of Babylon, the exodus of the Jews and the action of the Servant of the LORD. The names of Cyrus and Babel do not occur hereafter. The liberation work of Cyrus was the prove that the LORD and not any idol is God.

Chapter 40. The LORD comes to comfort his people.

This prophecy dates during the end period of the exile (586-516 BC).

- (i) The Sovereign LORD is coming at the head of the returning exiles (40:1-11). *The Spirit translated the human spirit of Isaiah to the last part of the Babylonian exile* when the LORD’s people (particularly Jerusalem, Judah)(40:1,9) had already suffered ‘enough’ in the eyes of the LORD, that is, had suffered a long time. He addresses his comfort to them (40:1-2). The present tense, ‘speak and proclaim’, are prophetic-poetical representations of the prophet being a contemporary of those he addresses (not those in Babylon, but those in Jerusalem representing Judah) and that they receive the message at the time he speaks. “Their hard labour as slaves has been completed, their sin/guilt has been paid for” refers to the fact that God regards their suffering as enough. It does not refer to their justification, because according to God’s righteous demand their suffering cannot make atonement for their sins (cf. 53:4-6).

The picture is of the LORD coming to Jerusalem at the head of the Judeans returning from exile (49:19; 52:8). A herald cries to prepare the way for the LORD (the LORD is the Messiah)¹⁵⁹ (40:3). The ‘valleys’ refer to the discouragement and despair/desperation of the exiles and the ‘mountains’ to the obstacles of self-aggrandisement and pride of their overlords (40:4). Not only Israel, but also the whole heathen world will see the revelation of God’s virtues (glory). The liberation of the exiles from Babylon is only the beginning. And the restoration of Israel’s existence as a nation is transcended and reference is made to the Messianic future and the forerunner (John the Baptist) in the desert¹⁶⁰ who prepared the way of the Messiah. The Old Testament prophet Malachi¹⁶¹ as well as the New Testament evangelist Luke¹⁶² refer to this forerunner. Only the first coming of Jesus Christ (the visible image of the invisible LORD¹⁶³) will be the full revelation of God’s glory to all mankind¹⁶⁴ (40:5). While all men are transitory (like withering grass), the word (gospel/good tidings) of the LORD stands forever, is never revoked or thwarted (40:6-9)¹⁶⁵. The prophecy that “the Sovereign LORD comes” has a much greater intent than just the return from exile (40:10)! The LORD will tend his flock like a shepherd, gather the lambs in his arms, carry them close to his heart and gently lead those that have young (40:11) as the New Testament fulfilment in Jesus Christ relates¹⁶⁶.

(ii) The LORD is exalted above everything created (40:12-26).

The LORD is the Creator¹⁶⁷. He measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, marked off the heavens with the breadth of his hand, weighed the mountains on scales (40:12). No one taught him knowledge, no one showed him the path of understanding (40:13-14).

The LORD is incomparable. The nations are like a drop in a bucket, he weighs islands as though they were dust on the scales, and the trees of the Lebanon are not sufficient for altar fires. All nations in the world¹⁶⁸ are less than nothing. To whom, then, will you compare God? What image will you compare him to (40:15-18)?

The LORD is the Ruler. He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth. He spreads out the heavens like a tent. He reduces the rulers of this world to nothing; he blows on them and they wither (40:21-24). He challenges the nations: “To whom will compare me? Or who is my equal? Lift your eyes and look to (the stars of) the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name.” Because of his great power and mighty strength not one of them is missing (40:25-26)¹⁶⁹.

The LORD strengthens his people. He gives strength to the weary, and increases the power of the weak. Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint (40:27-31).

Chapter 41. The LORD helps his people and challenges the gods of religions.

This prophecy is dated during the beginning of the appearance of Cyrus.

(i) The LORD’s argument with the gods (41:1-7). The whole wide world of heathen nations, even the most outlying places (coastlands) (41:1; cf. 40:15) are involved in the argument about: “Who is God?”. They don’t and can’t even respond to God’s argument!

The LORD is the Subduer of nations through stirring the mighty conqueror, Cyrus (41:2; 44:28; 45:1). Cyrus comes from Persia (the east of Babylon) (41:2) and Media (north of Babylon) (41:25). He meets victory at every step, subdues nations and turns them into dust (41:2-3).

The LORD is the first and the last. As Creator, the LORD is before everyone and as Eternal God he outlasts everyone in human history. He is the ‘I AM’ (41:4)¹⁷⁰. The craftsmen of the heathen nations at the ends of the earth make new but useless idols to fight against Cyrus (41:5-7).

(ii) Privileged Israel may look forward to their salvation (41:8-29). The Kingdom of God during the Old Testament period is still pictured within the limitations of the nation of Israel returning from exile, but the description points to the future New Testament reality¹⁷¹.

The LORD is the Chooser. He chose Israel¹⁷², the descendants of Abraham his friend above all nations as his bond-servant¹⁷³ (41:8).

The LORD is the Upholder. He says, “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (41:8-10). “I am your God who takes hold of your right hand” (41:13).

¹⁵⁹ Mark 1:1-3

¹⁶⁰ Luke 3:2

¹⁶¹ Malachi 3:1

¹⁶² Luke 1:76

¹⁶³ cf. Colossians 1:15

¹⁶⁴ Hebrews 1:3; 2 Corinthians 4:4

¹⁶⁵ Isaiah 55:10-11

¹⁶⁶ cf. John 10. The Good Shepherd

¹⁶⁷ cf. John 1:3

¹⁶⁸ Think of India, China, Russia, USA, Europe, Brazil, etc.

¹⁶⁹ Think of the number, distances and sizes of the stars in the universe!

¹⁷⁰ cf. Revelation 22:13. “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”

¹⁷¹ Romans 8:19-21

¹⁷² cf. John 15:16

¹⁷³ The name ‘servant of the LORD’ is used in different senses in Isaiah 41 and Isaiah 42.

The LORD is the Thresher. He will make the worm Jacob (little Israel) into a threshing sledge with many new and sharp teeth that will thresh the mountains (a symbol of powerful enemies), crush them and reduce them to chaff (41:14-16).

The LORD is the Creator of the new creation. He produces water for the poor and needy; makes rivers flow on barren heights and springs within the valley, turns the desert into pools of water and the parched ground into springs. He plants the cedar, acacia, myrtle, olive, pine and fir (41:17-20).

The LORD is the Foreteller of good tidings: he challenges other nations with their religions to present their case and set forth their argument; to bring their idols to tell what is going to happen, to reveal the former things and to predict the future things, to do something, whether good or bad. Idols are less than nothing, wind and confusion. The LORD was the first to foretell the coming of Cyrus (559-530 BC), who will tread on rulers as if they were mortar (41:21-29).

Chapter 42:1-7. The first Servant of the LORD prophecy: he is the Saviour of the new community.

(i) The Servant of the LORD (42:1-7). In Isaiah there are 4 prophecies about the Servant of the LORD: Isaiah 43:1-7, Isaiah 49:4-9; Isaiah 50:4-9, Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12. He is the expected Messiah (Jesus Christ) because Isaiah 42 is clearly quoted in Matthew 12:15-21 and Isaiah 53 is clearly quoted in Acts 8:53. He is clearly distinguished from Israel and much more than an ordinary human being (42:4,6,7; 49:6,7). He is chosen by the LORD¹⁷⁴. The LORD put his Spirit on him¹⁷⁵. He will bring God's justice or system of law (God's New Testament revelation) to the nations (2:3-4). He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice. He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. The most outlying places will put their hope in his teaching (the Torah, the revelation of his will) (41:4). The LORD will make him the Mediator between the LORD and man, a personalized covenant for his people, believing Israel, and a light (salvation) for the believing Gentiles (42:6; cf. 49:6). He will open eyes that are (spiritually) blind, free captives from prison and release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness (the captives in exile) (42:1-7)¹⁷⁶.

(ii) New things and a new song (42:8-12). Like Isaiah 41:21-29, the LORD will not give his glory to the gods of other religions (42:8; 48:11)! The LORD announced the former things (the old history of Israel) and announces the new things (the coming salvation) (42:9). "I have revealed and saved and proclaimed – I and not some foreign god among you. You (the LORD's people Israel) are my witnesses that I am God, declares the LORD" (43:12)." Let all the ends of the earth, specifically the people from Sela (capital of Edom) and the people from Kedar (northern Arabia) sing a new song to the praise of the LORD.

(iii) The coming salvation (42:13-17). For a long time the LORD kept silent, but now he cries out. He will march out and triumph over his enemies. He will lead the blind by ways they have not known, guide them along unfamiliar paths and turn darkness into light before them.

(iv) Israel is a sinful nation (42:18-25). The nation of Israel (called the servant of the LORD here) is sinful: The people are blind and deaf, have seen many things, but nevertheless paid no attention. So the LORD handed them over to the plunderers (Babylonians) and they become their loot. They did not follow the LORD's ways and did not obey his law. So he poured his burning anger, the violence of war, over them.

Chapter 43:1-21. The new community is saved to serve (to live to his glory and to witness).

This is what the LORD says (43:1,14).

(i) The coming salvation. The LORD is the only Saviour (43:1-8). The LORD created his (chosen believing) people Israel, redeems them (from Babylonia), summons them by name as 'his people' (43:1). He promises to be with them when they pass through the raging waters (symbol of the journey among the godless nations) and when they walk through the fire (symbol of persecution) (43:2). The ransom (compensation) for allowing Israel to escape the Persian onslaught of Cyrus was to let Egypt, Ethiopia (Cush) and Seba (part of Cush)¹⁷⁷ be conquered instead (43:3). This is the high price at which the LORD values his people. This is his sovereignty in dealing with the nations of the world. The elect believers of the LORD are precious and honoured in his eyes. He loves them and gives these nations in exchange for their life (43:4). They need not be afraid, because the LORD will bring everyone that is called by his name, his sons and daughters¹⁷⁸, from the ends of the earth (back to Judah)(43:5-6; cf. 11:11-12).

(ii) The coming salvation. The challenge to bring forward witnesses (43:9-13). The heathen nations with their gods are challenged to bring forward witnesses that can foretell/proclaim the former things (like the LORD)(43:9). The chosen believers (called the servant of the LORD here) are the LORD's witnesses so that the heathen nations may believe in the LORD. This is the missionary task of the LORD's people. Before the LORD no god was formed, nor will there be one after him. Apart from the LORD there is no saviour (43:10-11)! No one can deliver out of the LORD's hand. No one can reverse his acts (43:13)!

(iii) The coming salvation. The LORD is doing a new thing (43:14-21). This is a prophecy about Babylon's fall: the LORD will send Cyrus to Babylon and the Chaldeans will flee down the Euphrates in their proud ships (43:14). And this is a prophecy about Judah's return based on their former salvation from Egypt: the Creator made a way through the Red Sea for the Israelites, but engulfed the chariots and horses of Pharaoh. (43:15-17).

¹⁷⁴ Matthew 3:17

¹⁷⁵ Matthew 3:16

¹⁷⁶ Matthew 11:5

¹⁷⁷ Genesis 10:7

¹⁷⁸ Deuteronomy 32:6

The LORD says, “Forget the former things and do not dwell on the past, but look at the new thing” the LORD is doing: the salvation of his chosen people whom he formed for himself to proclaim his praise. He is making a way in the desert for them to return from exile (43:18-21).

The picture of the return from exile is connected to salvation in the Bible. The creation points to the exodus, which points to the return from exile, which points to salvation in the Messianic Era/the New Testament period.

In prophecy the successive acts of salvation in history are put together: (i) The creation = salvation from chaos (34:11:45:18)¹⁷⁹. (ii) The exodus from Egypt = salvation from slavery (43:15-17). (iii) The return from exile = salvation from banishment (43:5-7). (iv) The coming of Jesus Christ in the New Testament period (42:1-7) = the salvation from sin, from meaninglessness in life, from death, from Satan, from the decay of the present creation (the recreation/renewal of all things)(41:18-19). This is the new thing the LORD is doing!

Chapter 43:22 – 44:23. The God of past history and future prophecy.

This is what the LORD says (44:2,6,24).

(i) Salvation comes to an unworthy people (43:22 – 44:5). During the exile the LORD called Israel, but they did not call upon the LORD. He had not wearied and burdened Israel with demanding religious sacrifices, but Israel have wearied and burdened him with their sins. Nevertheless the LORD blotted out their transgressions *for his own sake* and remembers their sins no more!(43:22-25)¹⁸⁰. He saves his people out of pure grace¹⁸¹! The past is reviewed: their first forefather (Jacob) sinned and their spokesmen (the prophets, priests and kings) rebelled against the LORD, so the LORD disgraced their dignitaries and carried them into exile (cf. 47:6)¹⁸² (43:26-28). The fall into sin (missing the goal of God) is man’s greatest problem!

The salvation is for the LORD’s people (called the chosen servant of the LORD here)¹⁸³. He regards them as right/upright/righteous (Jeshurun) in his eyes¹⁸⁴ (44:1-2). The LORD will pour out his Spirit of renewal on their offspring (the elect believers)(44:3)¹⁸⁵, on the renewal of creation (44:4) and on non-Jews who become believers (who call on the name of the LORD and take on the name of Israel)(cf. 56:3-8)(44:5).

(ii) The only God is Israel’s Saviour (44:6-23). The LORD Almighty motivates Israel to believe in him. He is Israel’s King and Redeemer. “I am the First and the Last”: He is before any creature and he survives all. “Apart from me there is no God”: Thus he is the only God (cf. 43:10-11)(44:6). All other ‘gods’ of religions only exist as man-made inventions or demons/evil spirits. “Who is like me” revealing the past history and the future history (44:7-8)? The idols are contrasted with the LORD. The heathen regarded their carved and cast images as really present and worshipped them as ‘gods’. However, they are worthless and bring no profit. They bring their makers and worshippers into terror and infamy (44:9-11). The making of idols is pictured: the carpenter fashions an image from wood but also uses the wood to warm himself. Half the wood he worships as an idol that cannot see or understand and the other half he uses to bake bread (44:12-20). The LORD assures his people that he has swept their sins away like the morning mist, that he has redeemed them (from exile) as an accomplished fact, so certain will his coming salvation be! Therefore the prophet sings and calls creation to sing because the LORD displays his glory in what he does in his people (44:21-23).

Chapter 44:24 – 45:25. Israel’s liberation through the hand of Cyrus.

This is what the LORD says (45:1,11,14,18).

(i) The LORD sovereignly guides human history according to his plan, including that of Cyrus, his shepherd (44:24-28). Only the LORD and not the idols predict future history (cf. 41:26-29). The heathen have predictions, but those that make them are all false prophets and foolish diviners. (Their prophecies never materialise)! The LORD turns their learning/wisdom into nonsense, but carries out the words of his prophets and fulfils the predictions of his messengers. He predicted that Jerusalem would be inhabited and the towns of Judah built (44:24-26). And he predicted the accomplishments of Cyrus his shepherd, the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple (44:28)¹⁸⁶.

(ii) Cyrus is the anointed of the LORD (45:1-8). The LORD says to Cyrus that he is his ‘anointed’ (‘appointed’) to accomplish this task of subduing nations. The LORD will go before Cyrus to break down barriers for the sake of Israel, his chosen (45:1-4). Cyrus himself does not acknowledge the LORD, but later he and nations will get to know the LORD to some extent through what he does to Israel and call on his name (cf. 41:25)(45:1-6). “The LORD brings prosperity but also creates disaster. He brings salvation and righteousness” (cf. 19:22)(45:7-8)¹⁸⁷.

¹⁷⁹ Genesis 1:1-2; Psalm 104:30

¹⁸⁰ Hebrews:8:12; 10:17

¹⁸¹ cf. Ephesians 2:8-9

¹⁸² Lamentation 2:1-3

¹⁸³ cf. ‘the Israel of God’ (Galatians 6:14-16); not ‘carnal Israel’ (1 Corinthians 10:18)

¹⁸⁴ Due to his substitution sacrifice of atonement in Isaiah 53:5-6

¹⁸⁵ cf. Ezekiel 36:24-28 “I will take you out of the nations, gather you from all countries ... I will cleanse you from all your impurities ... I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws ... You will be my people and I will be your God!” Romans 11:4-5 “at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace ...”

¹⁸⁶ cf. Ezra 1:1-4

¹⁸⁷ Lamentations 3:32,38

(iii) The sovereignty of God in sending Cyrus (45:9-13). Woe to people who quarrel with the LORD about his sovereignty. Man is no more than a potsherd of clay when he criticises the Potter for what he is doing (45:9-11). The LORD who created man, also raised Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem and set the Judean exiles free. He does this not for a price, so that it is clear that only the LORD moved Cyrus (45:12-13).

(iv) The heathen will acknowledge the God of Israel (45:14-17). The glory of restored Israel is depicted as the heathen nations (symbolised by the African nations) bringing their agricultural products, merchandise of trade and themselves as slaves in chains to Israel in order to join Israel (cf. 44:5), because God is with Israel (45:14). The LORD remains unfathomable to idol makers (45:15)¹⁸⁸, but will bring everlasting salvation to his own people (45:17).

(v) All the ends of the earth is exhorted to turn to the LORD and be saved (45:18-25). The LORD did not create the earth to remain empty (remain uninhabited)(tohu) (due to what men may expect from the conquests of Cyrus)(45:18). He did not speak to mankind deceit and double-talk in secret (through spirits from the underworld as in Babylonia), but spoke the truth and what is right to Israel publicly. Everyone may and can hear the truth (45:19)! The prophet takes his stand in the fulfilment of the prophecies about the Babylonian exile (45:20-21). Therefore, let all the ends of the earth turn to the LORD and be saved (45:22).

The LORD's irrevocable word is that every knee in history will bow before him and every tongue will confess (acknowledge) him. Only in the LORD is righteousness and only the descendants of 'the Israel of God'¹⁸⁹ will be found righteous (justified)¹⁹⁰ and will rejoice (45:24-25). Fulfilled in the fall of Babylon, the liberation from the exiles, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem (44:26,28; 45:13).

Chapter 46. The God of the Bible is the only God. Only he executes his plan (council, purpose).

(i) The gods of Babel and the God of Israel (46:1-8). *The above mentioned prediction of the fall of Babylon is in the eyes of the prophet as certain as if it were already an accomplished fact!* (Note he comforts the LORD's people in verse 11-13). Bel (Merodach, Marduk) and Nebo are two most important gods of Babel. At Cyrus' attack, they have stooped low (actually, have fallen on their knees and bowed down before Cyrus). The prophet describes the powerlessness of the gods of Babylon: they were not able to save their own images as they were carried away on donkeys and camels. The gods of Babylon that were first carried by people in procession (45:20; 46:7) are now carried by animals into captivity. In contrast, the LORD carries the remnant of his people into liberation up to the end of their lives (their grey hairs), that is, as long as they are his people (46:1-4). The LORD is far too big to make an image of him! "To whom will you compare me ... or liken me?" (cf. 40:25-26)(46:5). Images are carried on the shoulders, set up in a shrine and nailed down so that they would not topple over (cf. 40:20). Images cannot move or talk or save anyone (46:6-7). Thus the LORD rebukes the rebels (unbelievers) in Israel (46:8).

(ii) Only the true God executes his purpose (plan, counsel) (46:9-13). There is "no other God than the LORD who makes known the end from the beginning and from ancient times what is still to come". "His purpose (plan, counsel) will stand and he will do all that he pleases" (cf. 14:24,27). It is the LORD who summoned Cyrus and brought about all he planned (46:9-11). Thus, the prophecy of rebuke (46:8) ends in a prophecy about the coming righteousness and salvation (46:12-13).

Chapter 47. The LORD predicts the fall of Babylon (the kingdom of the world).

(i) Babylon is humiliated (47:1-4). Babylon is depicted as 'a virgin daughter of the Chaldeans' (cf. 1:8), as 'a queen' (47:5) of kingdoms. The Chaldean dynasty began while Isaiah still lived (39:1). The prophet summons her to leave her throne and sit on the ground – the queen is humiliated to the status of a slave. She will no longer be cuddled and live in luxury, but will have to grind the heavy millstone and then go into exile wading naked through rivers¹⁹¹.

(ii) Babylon is rebuked for her mercilessness (47:5-7). The LORD had given Babylon *temporary* power in order to carry out his purpose to punish Israel, but she did not reflect on what might happen, showed no mercy and claimed *eternal* kingship.

(iii) Babylon rebuked for her carelessness (47:8-11). Babylon lives self-indulgent and carefree as if she is the only ruler. But the worst will overtake her in one day: namely, widowhood and childlessness. In spite of making her defence with the means of many sorceries and potent spells, she perseveres in her wickedness. She thinks that no one sees her! But a disaster will come on her that she cannot conjure away; a calamity will fall on her that she cannot ward off; a catastrophe will come on her that she cannot foresee (with her divination).

(iv) Babylon challenged to save herself (47:12-15). Babylon is exhorted to try and scare away the coming disaster, viewed as a demon, with her magic spells and sorceries. The counsel from her astrologers (who divide the heaven into houses and animal constellations) and the monthly predictions of her stargazers are challenged to come forward and save her from what is coming upon her. The images of the Babylonians are like stubble which the fire will burn up – they cannot even save themselves from the flame. It will be much worse than a coal fire where you sit by (- it will be the fire of hell). The gods of Babylon wobble in their place and there is not one that can save Babylon!

¹⁸⁸ Proverbs 25:2; Romans 11:33

¹⁸⁹ Galatians 6:14-16

¹⁹⁰ Romans 5:1-2,9-11

¹⁹¹ Jeremiah 13:26

Chapter 48. The LORD rebukes Israel. They know the former things and the new things.

(i) The LORD rebukes the Israelites living in Babylon for not responding to former prophecies (48:1-6a). The LORD rebukes the citizens of the holy city of Jerusalem living in Babylon who worship the LORD Almighty traditionally, but not in truth or righteousness (48:1-2). In spite of the many former prophecies that have gone into fulfilment (cf. 42:9), they remain stubbornly unresponsive (48:3-4)! The LORD told them these things long ago, before they happened, so that they can never say “my idols did it” (the idols predicted these things) (48:5). They refuse to admit it.

(ii) The LORD now announces new things (48:6b-8). “From now on the LORD tells them new things, before they happen; hidden things of which no one knows anything before today”, namely, the fall of Babylon and the liberation of his people from exile.

(iii) The LORD acts in mercy for his own glory (48:9-11). For his own sake the LORD delays his wrath against Israel, although he refined and tested them (through their exile). *The new thing the LORD is doing is liberating Israel from exile in order to uphold his honour that is desecrated by the heathen nations taunting Israel by saying, “Where is your God?”¹⁹² He acts for his own sake. He does not yield his glory to other gods (cf. 42:8) (48:11). That is why the LORD did not root out his people, but liberated them!*

(iv) The LORD teaches the best way for Israel which is enjoyed only in the way of obedience (48:12-19). The LORD reveals himself as: “The I Am, the First and the Last”¹⁹³ (48:12). He laid the foundations of the earth and spread out the universe. When he summoned (called with his creative Word) the earth and heavens, they all stood up together (came into existence, even when man knew nothing about this because man was then not yet created)! Nevertheless all creation and creatures in history must obey his commanding call (48:13)! Cyrus (who does not know the LORD), carries out the LORD’s purpose against Babylon. Thus without realising it, Cyrus is the LORD’s chosen ally! And Cyrus will succeed in his mission (48:14-15)! The prophet says that the sovereign LORD has sent (him) with the Spirit to say to Israel that the LORD teaches what is best for them, directs them in the way they should go (48:16-17). If only Israel would obey the LORD’s commanding call, they would experience peace like a river (that never stops flowing) and righteousness like the waves of the sea (that never stops rolling towards one)¹⁹⁴ and their descendants would be like the numberless grains of sand (48:18-19)¹⁹⁵!

(v) Song of liberation of the believers (48:20-21). The prophet-poet sees in his spirit Babylon as already conquered and the exiles ready to leave. He says: “Leave Babylon! Flee from the Babylonians!” The returning exiles do not flee out of fear, but hurry with shouts of joy and proclaim it to the ends of the earth, saying, “the LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob and led them back through the desert”.

(vi) A statement against the unbelievers (48:22). “There is no peace (healing and wholeness) for the wicked” (cf. 57:21).

Chapter 49:1-9a. The second Servant of the LORD prophecy: his consolation by the LORD.

(i) His calling (49:1). In the second prophecy about the Servant of the LORD (49:1-9a) the Servant of the LORD is himself the speaker (49:1-6). The ‘coastlands’ represent the wide world (cf. 42:4). They are all called to listen, because it concerns them (49:6b). The Servant of the LORD existed, his name (Jesus) was mentioned and was called before he was born (before he took on the human nature)¹⁹⁶. This was fulfilled in Matthew 1:20-23.

(ii) His equipment (49:2). His mouth was made like a sharpened sword¹⁹⁷ (not to judge as in Revelation 2:16, but) to proclaim the prophetic word of salvation with which he conquers the world and wins hearts (as in Revelation 6:2). Even before his public appearance and action he enjoyed the intimate shelter of the LORD’s nearness¹⁹⁸.

(iii) His name¹⁹⁹ (49:3). He is called ‘Israel’ because he is the Fulfilment of everything that could be said of Israel (the people of God) as the servant of the LORD. He is the visible display of the LORD’s (invisible) glory (cf. 44:23)²⁰⁰. He is the means (instrument, Mediator) of the LORD’s glory.

(iv) His reward (49:4). The contradiction between the Servant’s glorious calling and apparent fruitless labour among the Israelites throughout the Old Testament period was due to their unbelief and disobedience²⁰¹. Nevertheless he is confident that he will receive his reward²⁰².

(v) His task (mission) (49:5-6). His task is to (physically) restore the tribes of Israel in exile²⁰³ to their land (by means of people like Zerubbabel, Joshua and Ezra, his instruments and types). This would comparatively be “a small thing”. His task is to (spiritually) bring the remnant of (chosen, believing) Israelites back to the LORD and he is made a light for the Gentiles (cf. 42:6) to bring the LORD’s salvation to the ends of the earth²⁰⁴!

¹⁹² Psalm 42:3

¹⁹³ Revelation 1:17

¹⁹⁴ John 1:16

¹⁹⁵ Genesis 22:17-18

¹⁹⁶ Jeremiah 1:5; Galatians 1:15

¹⁹⁷ cf. Hebrews 4:13; Jeremiah 23:29

¹⁹⁸ cf. “in the bosom of the Father”/ “on the side of the Father” (John 1:18)

¹⁹⁹ Mark 10:45

²⁰⁰ Colossians 1:15

²⁰¹ Matthew 23:37; Hebrews 4:2,6

²⁰² Hebrews 12:2; cf. 1 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:8.

²⁰³ Amos 5:2

²⁰⁴ Matthew 28:19; John 11: 52; Acts 13:47

(vi) The prophet speaks to the Servant of the LORD and about his humiliation and exaltation (49:7-9a). The Servant of the LORD is despised by the masses in Israel and by the heathen (Roman) oppressors. (The suffering of the believing Israelites being despised by the kingdom of the world is personalized and concentrated in the Servant of the LORD). His exaltation will be so grand that kings will stand up from their thrones to honour him and princes will bow down to worship him. This is the LORD's doing who fulfils his promise faithfully to his chosen Servant. His exaltation is called 'the time of the LORD's favour' and 'the day of salvation' (49:8)²⁰⁵. The LORD is making the Servant of the LORD to be a covenant for the people (of Israel) to set the captives free and restore them to the land – the main theme of the former chapters (cf. 42:7).

(vii) The return from exile in Babylon (49:9b-13). The main theme (the liberation from Babylon) is continued: the returning exiles will not hunger, thirst, or burn in the sun. The LORD will guide them with compassion and lead them besides springs of water (49:10). He will level mountains (unassailable problems and opposition) and raise highways (to return) (49:11). The returning exiles will come afar from all directions (49:12). The LORD will comfort his people and have compassion on his afflicted ones (49:13).

SECTION 8. Isaiah 49:14 – 55:13.

The restoration of Zion and the Servant of the LORD.

This is a new collection of prophecies which do not mention (i) Cyrus, (ii) the conquest (fall) of Babylon or (iii) the contradiction between the LORD and the idols at all. It describes the situation after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (after 586 BC). It alludes to the exodus from Babylon (52:11; 55:12), but focusses on what is going to follow, namely, the rebuilding and glorification of Jerusalem. Zion is now the main theme (referred to once in 40:1-11).

Zion is a reference to Jerusalem, to the people of the LORD (cf. 40:1) and *in the light of the New Testament, a picture of the New Testament Church described in Old Testament features*. And the prophecies about the Servant of the LORD (50:4-11; 52:13 – 53:12) reach their peak in this section!

Chapter 49:14 – 50:3. The LORD does not forget his new community (Zion) and use Gentiles to return Israelites.

(i) The LORD cannot forget Zion (49:14-16). Zion is addressed as a person (a women wearing ornaments)(cf. 40:2). She is ruined and made desolate (without inhabitants) and the land is laid waste (49:19). Though a mother can forget the baby at her breast, the LORD will not forget her (49:15)! He engraved (tattooed)²⁰⁶ her on the palms of his hand and keeps seeing her walls (now still ruined) in his mind.

(ii) Zion's inhabitants will hasten back (49:17-21). While the enemy withdraws, the exiled inhabitants of Jerusalem hasten to return. The former barren woman (cf. 54:1), bereaved of children (49:20) will wear her returned children as an ornament, that is, she is glorified by their return (49:18). The former ruined city will be too small to contain the returned citizens (49:19-21)!

(iii) Zion's inhabitants will be carried back (49:22-23). The first of three small prophecies. The nations will eagerly help to bring the former exiles back to Jerusalem. The picture is of a person carrying a small child in his arms and against his breast²⁰⁷ or on his shoulder. Kings and queens (underlings of Cyrus) will aid their return (cf. 66:19-20).

(iv) They will be saved by the LORD (49:24-26). Is it possible to retrieve plunder from a fierce warrior (the Babylonian kingdom)? Yes, it is possible! The LORD will fight this fierce opponent, take the captives from his warriors and save the inhabitants of Jerusalem! The Babylonians will destroy one another by fighting among themselves! Thus, all mankind will know that the LORD is the Saviour, the Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob (the True God)(49:26).

(v) They were sent into exile due to their sins (50:1-3). Jerusalem as representative of all the Israelites is directly addressed. The LORD did not send Zion's inhabitants away with a certificate of divorce²⁰⁸ and did not sell their children to pay a debt²⁰⁹, but the Israelites were sold and sent away into exile due to their own transgressions! The LORD even tried to restore the broken relationship (by the Law and Prophets they had taken with them and by the preaching of the prophets during the exile), but failed (cf. 42:25-26; 49:4; 53:1). He who dried up the Red Sea²¹⁰ during the exodus from Egypt is able to rescue the Israelites from exile in Babylon! *Once more the exodus from Egypt and the return from exile in Babylon are illustrations of the salvation of the LORD (43:14-21)!*

Chapter 50:4-9. The third Servant of the LORD prophecy: his faith and obedience.

(i) The equipment of the Servant of the LORD (50:4-9). In the third prophecy about the Servant of the LORD (50:4-11) the Servant of the LORD himself is the speaker (cf. 49:1). He is the Great Prophet of the future who can only be Jesus Christ! He has been equipped for his prophetic office by the Sovereign LORD (the Lord LORD)²¹¹. The Sovereign LORD gave him an instructed tongue to know what to say in order to sustain the weary and burdened people (42:3)²¹².

²⁰⁵ cf. 2 Corinthians 6:1-2

²⁰⁶ Leviticus 19:28. Forbidden for believers, but the LORD makes use of this indelible picture.

²⁰⁷ Numbers 11:12

²⁰⁸ cf. Deuteronomy 24:1; Matthew 19:7

²⁰⁹ Exodus 21:7; 2 Kings 4:1; Nehemiah 5:5; Matthew 18:25

²¹⁰ Psalm 106:9

²¹¹ Hebrew: Adonai JaHWeH

²¹² Matthew 11:28

In his daily fellowship with the Sovereign LORD, listening to his Word²¹³ and speaking with him in prayer²¹⁴ he knows how to comfort people. Every morning his thoughts are determined by God's instruction. This describes the life of the Servant's soul (50:4). The Sovereign LORD has opened the Servant's ears to his calling and his instruction (equipping). The Servant did not rebel (oppose) the calling or instruction²¹⁵ and also did not draw back in fear from persecution (50:5). He submitted his body to enmity, oppression and persecution: to flogging his back with a whip with pieces of stone and glass in the strands²¹⁶; to pulling out his beard, to mocking by the people²¹⁷ and to spitting in his face²¹⁸ (50:6)²¹⁹. The Servant will not allow this ill-treatment to make him red in the face (to feel ashamed), but he will set his face like flint (resist fearlessly, be undeterred)(50:7). The LORD will be his Vindicator, therefore he challenges anyone to accuse him or bring charges against him²²⁰. But his opponents don't dare to stand trial before the LORD, the Highest Judge! The glory of his opponents will fall apart like a moth eaten garment (50:8-9). Isaiah 50:8-9 is applied to the Christian in the New Testament²²¹.

(ii) The exhortation of the prophet to believers and unbelievers (50:10-11). Let those genuine obedient believers (the remnant) who walk in the darkness of oppression and persecution (cf. 9:2) trust/rely on the LORD (50:10). But those unbelievers who light their own fires and flaming torches (of enmity) shall certainly be set ablaze by their own torches and experience torment (50:11).

Chapter 51. The promised restoration of Zion continued.

(i) The call of the prophet to hear the news about the coming salvation and to see their origin, Abraham and Sarah (51:1-8). The prophet addresses the believing remnant of Israel: those who pursue righteousness (to possess righteousness and to live righteousness out); who seek the LORD (to belong to him)(51:1); who know what is right; who has the LORD's law in their heart (51:7). The (barren) 'rock' from which Israel originated was (old) Abraham with (barren) Sarah, but the LORD made him miraculously the father of many nations. Israel's origin was small, but the LORD multiplied her. He will do it again (51:2). He will restore the ruins, desert and wasteland of Zion into a garden like Eden, full of joyful and grateful people (51:3). *At the first coming (of the Messiah) the law (message) of justice (a synonym for salvation) will become a light to the Gentile nations (cf. 2:2-3; 42:1,4; 49:6). The most distant nations will expectantly wait for it. Clearly the LORD's message of salvation is intended for all nations and is realised during the New Testament period (the Messianic Age) (51:4-5)! And at the second coming (of the Messiah) the created heavens (universe) will vanish like smoke and the earth with its inhabitants will wear out like a garment²²². But "the salvation of the LORD will last forever and his righteousness will never fail". Clearly there is (eternal) life beyond this created life (51:6,8)! Therefore people who know what is right and have the LORD's law in their hearts must not fear the reproach of enemies or be terrified at their insults! The enemies will wear out like a moth-eaten garment and become devoured by worms (51:7-8).*

(ii) The prayer of the prophet to the LORD to reveal his salvation (51:9-11). In his prayer the prophet exhorts the LORD to act. 'The arm' of the LORD is a symbol of his divine power. It is regarded as 'sleeping' as long as the nations continue to oppress the LORD's people! He prays that the LORD will act as in the past when Rahab (Egypt), a monster, oppressed the LORD's people and the LORD made a road through the Red Sea²²³. He expects that the ransomed of the LORD (the believing remnant) will return with singing and joy (51:9-10).

- Rahab is the unruly, chaotic sea at creation²²⁴, poetically described as "God smiting Rahab"²²⁵. This Old Testament imagery is transferred from creation to the narrative of redemption/salvation (from Egypt)²²⁶. Rahab is a poetic synonym for Egypt²²⁷.
- Leviathan is an aquatic monster from the sea²²⁸. A symbol of Pharaoh and the Egyptians²²⁹. A symbol of Assyria (the fleeing serpent, the Tigris River)²³⁰. A symbol of Babylonia (the twisting serpent, the Euphrates River)²³¹. Possibly a dragon in ancient mythology, supposed to cause eclipses of the sun by wrapping its coils around the sun²³². A description of the crocodile²³³.

²¹³ John 8:26

²¹⁴ Mark 1:35

²¹⁵ John 8:29; John 14:31

²¹⁶ John 19:1

²¹⁷ Matthew 27:39

²¹⁸ Matthew 26:67

²¹⁹ Jeremiah 20:7-8

²²⁰ cf. John 8:46

²²¹ Romans 8:32-34

²²² A prophecy about the degeneration of the earth by climate abuse, pollution, waste and wars.

²²³ Psalm 89:9-10

²²⁴ Genesis 1:2

²²⁵ Job 26:12; 38:8-11.

²²⁶ Psalm 74:12-14; cf. Isaiah 43:14-21; 51:9-11.

²²⁷ Psalm 87:4; Isaiah 30:7

²²⁸ Psalm 104:26

²²⁹ Ezekiel 29:3-5

²³⁰ Isaiah 27:1

²³¹ Isaiah 27:1

²³² Job 3:8.

²³³ Job 41:1-34

(iii) The rebuke of the LORD against Israel's fear and unbelief (51:12-16). Who are you when you fear mortal men (cf. 51:7), people as vulnerable and temporary as grass (cf. 40:6), that make you forget the (almighty) Creator of the present heavens and earth? Who are you when you constantly tremble at the oppressor who is on his way to destruction (by Cyrus' victory) (51:12-13)? The exiles in chains and imprisoned in dungeons will soon be set free, because the Almighty churns the sea, (he upsets the nations and turns them upside down)(51:14-15). "He has put his words in your (the believers') mouth" (cf. 59:21). This means that the believer has received God's revelation and must speak of it²³⁴. The LORD covers (protects) the believer with the shadow of his hand (his nearness and presence). The LORD's salvation goes much further than the liberation from exile, because he is going to lay the foundations of a new heaven and new earth for the enjoyment of his (elect, believing) people (51:16).

(iv) The call of the prophet to Zion to revive (51:17-23). The prophet sees Zion as a woman lying down powerlessly after she had drunk the cup of the LORD's wrath, a cup filled with a drug that causes one to stagger. 'The cup which a person is given to drink' is a symbol of the destiny of his life, sometimes in a positive sense²³⁵ and sometimes in a negative sense²³⁶ (51:17). None of Zion's citizens was able to take her by the hand and lead her to safety (51:18)! She was overpowered by two calamities: there was no one who cared for her plight, only those who rejoiced over her fall²³⁷. And there was only destruction, famine and the sword²³⁸. The exhausted people and spilled possessions were heaped together at the head of every street (51:19-20)²³⁹. The prophet announces the coming salvation: Because the enemies were determined to destroy the Israelites, *the Sovereign LORD took the cup (with all its sufferings) out of the hand of his people and gave it into the hands of her tormentors (the Babylonians)*. These tormentors had made them lie down prostrate and walk over their backs (51:21-23).

Chapter 52:1-12. The promised restoration of Zion continued.

(i) The call of the prophet to Zion to rise up (52:1-6). While the unholy city, Babylon, had to take off her clothes (47:2), the holy city, Jerusalem, clothed herself with the LORD's strength (51:9) and put on her most beautiful garments (purified from defilement). The uncircumcised (in heart) and defiled Chaldeans will not enter Zion again (52:1). She must shake of the dust and take her seat of honour. She must free herself from her chains of slavery and rags (cf. 3:24)(52:2). She was unwillingly sold for nothing, but will be redeemed (bought) without money²⁴⁰, because the LORD will liberate her by his sovereign will and power (52:3). The LORD continues to address his people. He says that the Israelites were liberated before from Egypt and from Assyria while the Assyrians had no reason or right to oppress them (even when the LORD was punishing Israel)(52:4-5). The oppressor raged and blasphemed all day long, but the LORD's people will know the LORD as he revealed himself (his name) and they will know that it is the LORD who foretold the day of redemption (52:6).

(ii) The prophet describes the joyful return of the exiles (52:7-12). The prophet first sees the messenger bringing the good news of Babylon's fall and the release of the exiles. The good tidings of peace and salvation are summarized by the words: "Your LORD reigns!" He has defeated all opposition and reigns supremely and sovereignly²⁴¹ (52:7). Then the prophet sees the procession of exiles returning to the ruins of Jerusalem with the LORD himself at the head and the rear of the procession²⁴². As if Jerusalem was still inhabited, he exhorts the watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem to lift up their voices and shout for joy. They see the procession as close as 'eye to eye' (52:8,9,12). The LORD comes to be with them in power so that all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of the LORD (52:10). The prophet exhorts the exiles to make use of their freedom, come out from unclean Babylon (cf. 48:20), carry the vessels of the temple with them²⁴³ and to be the LORD's set apart people (52:11).

52:13 – 53:12. The fourth Servant of the LORD prophecy: he would be exalted through suffering.

(1) First stanza (couplet) (52:13-15).

The Servant would be exalted (elevated) only through suffering.

In the first stanza the LORD speaks while pointing at his Servant, Jesus Christ.

Verse 13. The Servant would be exalted.

"See, my servant will prosper, he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted."

²³⁴ Deuteronomy 30:14

²³⁵ Psalm 16:5; 23:5;

²³⁶ Psalm 11:6; 75:8; Jeremiah 49:12; Matthew 26:39

²³⁷ Psalm 137:7

²³⁸ cf. Ezekiel 14:21

²³⁹ Lamentation 2:19; 4:1

²⁴⁰ 1 Peter 1:18

²⁴¹ Revelation 12:10; 19:6

²⁴² Exodus 14:19. "Then the Angel of the LORD, who had been travelling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them." Cp. Exodus 13:21.

²⁴³ 2 Chronicles 36:10; Ezra 1:7

The exaltation of the Servant of the LORD consisted of his resurrection, ascension and enthronement to the right hand of God. “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11)²⁴⁴. He will be prosperous and see that his struggle will be crowned with victory and his suffering will have great results.

Verse 14. The Servant would be humiliated.

“Just as there were many who were appalled at him – his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness -

The humiliation of the Servant of the LORD consisted of his maltreatment by people. “Some began to spit at him: they blindfolded him, struck him in the face with their fists ... The guards beat him” (Mark 14:65). “Pilate had Jesus flogged and handed him over to be crucified ... They twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him ... Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him” (Mark 15:15,15,17,19; John 19:1-3). They disfigured his appearance and made him almost unrecognisable as a human being.

Verse 15. The Servant would be glorification.

“So he will sprinkle many nations and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.”

Verse 15 compares his humiliation in verse 14 with his future glorious exaltation above everyone. Many nations and kings will jump up in utter bewilderment (sprinkle) and silently marvel at beholding his impressive appearance (cf. 49:7)²⁴⁵. They will see what they have never seen before (namely, the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being) and they will hear what they have never heard (understood) before (namely, the Gospel: God so loved the world ...). “What no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived, namely what God has prepared for those who love him²⁴⁶! ‘The many’ who were appalled at his suffering are surpassed by ‘the many’ who came to know him after his glorification. They are an uncountable number of believers from every nation, including even their high ranking kings.

(2) Second stanza (couplet) (53:1-3).

The Servant would be despised and rejected by men. The way down.

In the second stanza, the prophet speaks of ‘we’ and ‘us’ as representative of all the people of the LORD (cf. 53:8).

Verse 1. In the religious area the Servant would be treated with unbelief.

“Who believes the message (revelation) we are hearing?²⁴⁷ To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”

The LORD’s arm is his ability to do what the human mind deems impossible (his incarnation and miracles). This message is not revealed to everyone²⁴⁸. Not everyone believes the revelation²⁴⁹.

Verse 2. In the physical area the Servant would be unattractive.

“He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his (human) appearance that we should desire him.”

He was born from the defunct royal house of David (like a root from dry ground)(cf. 11:1)²⁵⁰. He had no physical beauty or majesty to attract people to him. He was not a well-spoken or fine-looking man like David²⁵¹. His disfigured appearance (at his trials) caused people to be appalled at him.

Verse 3. In the social area the Servant would be despised and rejected.

“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with sickness (suffering). Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised and we esteemed him not.”

The ancestors of Jesus according to his human nature were no great saints. Think of Tamar who seduced her father-in-law, Rahab the prostitute, Ruth the non-Israelite foreigner, Batsheba raped by David. Jesus was raised in Nazareth in the despised province of Galilee (where many Gentiles lived)²⁵². His own hometown took offence at him²⁵³. His own brothers did not believe in him²⁵⁴. He lived in a time that Israel as God’s people was dry and dead²⁵⁵ and the house of David had not ruled for a very long time. No one felt naturally attracted to him²⁵⁶. The Jewish leaders of the Sanhedrin spat in his face and struck him with fists²⁵⁷.

²⁴⁴ Acts 3:13

²⁴⁵ cf. Job 29:9-10; Psalm 22:29

²⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 2:7-10

²⁴⁷ The verb does not necessarily refer to the past. “Who believes the revelation we are hearing.”

²⁴⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:9

²⁴⁹ John 12:37-38; Romans 10:16

²⁵⁰ cf. Job 14:7

²⁵¹ cf. 1 Samuel 16:18

²⁵² Mark 1:9; cf. John 1:46

²⁵³ Mark 6:3

²⁵⁴ John 7:5

²⁵⁵ Matthew 21:43

²⁵⁶ Isaiah 53:1-3

²⁵⁷ Matthew 26:67

The Roman soldiers took his clothes off, spat on him, pressed a crown of thorns on his head and struck him on his head again and again with a staff²⁵⁸. He was so marred that people could not look on his disfigured face!

(3) Third stanza (couplet) (53:4-6).

The Servant would be crucified in our place for our sins.

In the third stanza the prophet speaks of the contrast between 'he' (the Servant) and 'we' (the people of the LORD) and prophesies the ultimate peak of the Servant's work of salvation, namely, that he suffered in our place! He suffered substitutionally!

Verse 4. The Servant would carry our sicknesses and sorrows.

"Surely, he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows. Yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted."

Jesus Christ delivered many people who were possessed by evil spirits and healed many sick people as the fulfilment of this prophecy²⁵⁹. This is a summary of all human suffering, which was the consequence of the fall of man into sin. The Servant carried all these willingly and in our stead, as our Substitute. This enhances the contrast between 'our' despising and rejecting (second stanza) and 'his' substitutional suffering (third stanza)!

Even worse: 'we' (in the spirit of the Pharisees) regarded his suffering as a deserved punishment from God for all his own sins. That he was smitten by a plague from God²⁶⁰ for his own transgressions instead of as a punishment for 'our' transgressions!

Verse 5. The Servant would be crucified for our sins.

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."

His hands and feet would be pierced (by nails on the cross) and his side (by a spear)²⁶¹(53:5)²⁶², but in our place, as a substitution for our transgressions. Transgression is our deliberate rebellion and overstepping his commands, norms and values). He would be crushed (by a violent death), also in our place, as a substitute for our iniquities. Iniquity is the subtly twisting of his truth and the reality as he sees it). These make all people guilty!

But the Servant would be punished in our place²⁶³. The punishment that brings peace (complete wholeness) and the lashes that bring perfect healing is the secret wisdom of God which his enemies and even Satan did not grasp²⁶⁴! What no man expected, became God's pleasant surprise!

Verse 6. The Servant would will be punished for our wilful independence.

"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way. And the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Each of us went our own way (56:11; 57:17)²⁶⁵. The means missing God's goal for your life. The sin of man is deliberate, stubborn and obstinate independence from God. That is why the sin of man is guilty and punishable. But the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. "Us all" refers to all the believers²⁶⁶. The Servant not only died for us, but in our place! "He bore our sins in his body on the tree"²⁶⁷. He was "made sin", so that whoever believed in him, would be "made the righteousness of God"²⁶⁸. He thus exchanged places with us!

(4) Fourth stanza (couplet) (53:7-9).

The Servant would submit voluntarily to his suffering. The way up.

In the fourth stanza the prophet describes the way the Servant suffered: as a lamb slaughtered, as a convicted criminal assigned to a dishonourable burial. The Hebrew translation and interpretation of verse 8-12 presents difficulties.

Verse 7. The Servant would suffer as a lamb.

"He was maltreated and humiliated, yet he did not open his mouth. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. He was driven, maltreated and worked to death (by slavedrivers)²⁶⁹. He offered his back to those who flogged him with a whip (50:6). He was silent before his shearers. He resisted no one, but allowed them to humiliate him. "When they hurled insults, he did not retaliate. When he suffered, he made no threats. Instead he entrusted himself to him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:21-23). They shore him from his humanity. They shore him from his rights. They shore him from his glory.

²⁵⁸ Matthew 27:27-30

²⁵⁹ Matthew 8:16-17

²⁶⁰ cf. Job 1:11

²⁶¹ Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34,37

²⁶² Psalm 22:16

²⁶³ cf. Romans 3:25

²⁶⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:7-10

²⁶⁵ 1 Peter 2:25

²⁶⁶ Luke 10:45; John 10:11

²⁶⁷ 1 Peter 2:24

²⁶⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:21

²⁶⁹ Exodus 3:7

Jesus Christ is “the Lamb without blemish or defect (sinless)(Hebrews 7:26,28), who was chosen before the creation of the world, but revealed within human history”²⁷⁰. He is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Verse 8. The Servant would die as a convicted criminal.

“By maltreatment and judgement he was taken away (from his anxiety and trials). Who can find his dwelling place? For he was cut off from the land of the living. For the transgression of my people he was stricken.”

By maltreatment he was taken away (not from this life on earth, but) from his anxiety in Gethsemane and from his trials before the worldly authorities) (to be crucified on Golgotha)! He received the death sentence! He would not die in a peaceful way (in old age), but he would die as a convicted criminal, sentenced by an unrighteous Jewish Sanhedrin and a godless Roman court.

Who can find his dwelling place? Who knows where he is after his death and burial? In the Old Testament period until the time the disciples of Jesus mourned the death of Jesus, there was little knowledge about life after death. People generally believe that there is no memory or care after death²⁷¹. The truth about life after death was hidden from the view of Israel and all mankind. What is clear is that he died and was cut off from the land of the living²⁷²! Then once more, the prophet acknowledges his solidarity with the transgression and guilt of his people.

Verse 9. The Servant was assigned a dishonourable grave, but would be buried as a rich man.

“He was assigned a grave with the wicked, but was with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, nor was their any deceit in his mouth.”

To receive a dishonourable grave, a common grave among other convicted criminals, was a terrible ordeal in Israel (cf. 14:18-20; 26:14). Nevertheless, the plan of his enemies failed! Jesus was buried in the tomb of the rich Joseph of Arimathea²⁷³. He was with the rich in his death. From verse 9b the prophecy relates God’s justification and exaltation of the Servant! God accorded him honour instead of the dishonour his enemies had planned. The divine decision (plan) to give him an honourable burial is because he was guiltless: he had done no violence and had no deceit in his mouth.

During his life Jesus Christ was called names as being a deceiver, a demon-possessed and mad²⁷⁴. His honourable burial was the first sign that the LORD regarded his Servant, Jesus Christ, to be perfectly blameless!

(5) Fifth stanza (couplet) (53:10-12).

The Servant would prosper (make successful) God’s will (salvation plan).

In the fifth stanza the prophet and the LORD speak of the highlight of the Servant’s coming. The result of his suffering would be the justification of the many (the full number of saved people).

Verse 10. The Servant’s death and resurrection is God’s will. It results in his future offspring and the prospering of God’s will.

“Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer. When the LORD has made his life (soul) a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days. And the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.”

His voluntary death is a guilt offering which he brings (substitutionally) in our place. He suffered death, not because he was guilty, but because it was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer! Hereby the LORD made his soul (life, body and soul, entire personality) a guilt offering. Unlike animal guilt offerings, the Servant brings a willing personal guilt offering which satisfies the LORD’s violated holiness and righteousness and reconciles us to God.

Because the LORD is perfectly holy and righteous, he demands that all unholiness and unrighteousness in the world must be punished and that all people must become perfectly holy and righteous. No one qualifies because everyone falls short! Therefore only the LORD himself can save man²⁷⁵! He takes on the human nature in Jesus Christ and brings this guilt offering himself! This guilt offering removes the just anger of God against sin and reconciles the sinner to God. Justification includes the following:

- i. Paying the debt/penalty and redeeming the debtor by means of a sacrifice of atonement (expiation).
- ii. Satisfying God’s righteous demand, appeasing his holy and righteous anger (indignation) against sin (injustice)(propitiation).
- iii. Forgiving all the sins of the believer.
- iv. Restoring the relation between the sinner and the Lord (reconciliation). Reconciling the sinner to God, restoring him to God’s favour and complete acceptance.
- v. Guaranteeing that blessings like sanctification and glorification would certainly follow (Romans 8:29-30)

Jesus Christ had to die²⁷⁶, because this was the only way in which atonement for sins could be made. Only thus the prediction about his death in the Bible was fulfilled! In human history Jesus Christ died due to the unjust condemnation of worldly judges. But in Gods history of salvation he died due to the perfectly just condemnation of the sin of the world by the Judge, God himself!

²⁷⁰ 1 Peter 1:19-20

²⁷¹ Psalm 88:5

²⁷² Acts 8:32-33

²⁷³ Mattheüs 27:57-60

²⁷⁴ John 7:12,20; John 8:48; John 10:19-20

²⁷⁵ Isaiah 43:10-11; John 1:21; John 4:42

²⁷⁶ Luke 24:26; Matthew 26:54

When the LORD has made his life (soul) a guilt offering, the will of the LORD would prosper in his hand. Three results:

- i. he would see seed/offspring, that is, “spiritual offspring”, “the many people he would justify” (verse 11) and bless (see Genesis 22:17-18).
- ii. he would lengthen his days, that is, he would live forever after his resurrection from the dead (Revelation 1:18; cf. Isaiah 26:19).
- iii. he would have a great task after his death and resurrection. “The LORD’s pleasure/wish would prosper in his hand.” The pleasure/wish of the LORD is the deepest reason for his suffering (verse 10a), but at the same time the highest reason for his marvellous future (verse 10b)! This future is described in verse 11. In his hand, that is, through his means (sovereign power, wisdom and love) God’s plan of salvation would progress continually! Through his death and resurrection Jesus Christ would multiply his spiritual offspring/descendants destined for eternal life (see John 12:32).

Verse 11. The Servant would see the result of his suffering.

“After the suffering of his soul he will see (the result of his suffering) and be satisfied. By his knowledge (of the LORD) my righteous servant will justify many (the full number of believers). And he will bear their iniquities.” The Servant would see the result of the suffering of his soul and be satisfied. Although the unrighteous judges in the world would judge him to be “unrighteous” and despise him (53:4), the LORD regards him explicitly as “the Righteous One”. The righteousness of the Servant is the ground for justifying the many: he would sentence “the godless” in Israel and the world with perfect justice (11:4-5), and justify the great mass (the full number) of believers. ‘To justify’ means: to pronounce, to regard and to treat the believer as perfectly righteous in God’s eyes.

Verse 11 speaks about the three offices of the servant:

- i. by his knowledge of the LORD²⁷⁷ and the LORD’s revelation (plan of salvation)²⁷⁸ (his prophetic office),
- ii. the righteous Servant will justify many. The spoils consist of the conquering of the uncountable crowd of believers²⁷⁹ (his royal office)
- iii. and carried their iniquities onto the cross away from them²⁸⁰ (his priestly office).

Verse 12. The Servant would receive the reward from the LORD for his substitutional suffering, namely, the many people he would justify.

“Therefore (because of his substitutional suffering) the LORD will give him as his reward (portion, share, dowry) the (above mentioned) ‘many’. He will receive as reward (spoils, boot, loot) this (above mentioned) ‘many’ (the full number of believers, the uncountable great number of justified/saved people), because he poured out his lifeblood unto death, was numbered with the transgressors (criminals), bore the sin of ‘many’ and (even) made intercession for the transgressors (those who would kill him).”

The LORD says that the complete reward or inheritance of the Servant consists of the many people that are being justified. The texts does not say that he would divide/share the spoils with the many (the powerful/mighty ones), because he cannot be put on a par with “the (political and military) mighty ones” (in the world). The object is “the many” and the verb means “to receive as his share” (in the Qal form)²⁸¹. The text does not intend to say that the Messiah would only receive a part of the many as his inheritance, but on the contrary that he would receive “the many” as a whole as his inheritance. Romans 5:17-19 teaches the solidarity of all unrighteous people with their representative, Adam, and likewise the solidarity of all righteous people with their Representative, Jesus Christ. Compare ‘the One’ with ‘the many’. “If by the trespass of the one man (Adam), death reigned through that one man, how much more, will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of (his) righteousness, reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Consequently, just as the result of one trespass (the fall of Adam into sin) was condemnation for all men (whom Adam represents), so also the result of one act of righteousness (the crucifixion of Jesus) was justification that brings life for all men (whom Jesus Christ represents)²⁸². For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many (all people in history except Jesus) were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many (all believers only) will be made righteous!²⁸³” Because the Servant (Jesus Christ) would bear the iniquities of “the many” (the elect believers) he would in the same way justify “the many”. Therefore the LORD would give him “the many” as his reward (spoils, bounty, boot, loot) and as his possession (inheritance)! The reason for the exaltation of the Servant is his substitutional suffering! He poured out his ‘soul’ (life blood)²⁸⁴ in death, he was numbered among the transgressors (criminals)²⁸⁵, he bore the sins of many (the above mentioned believers) and (even) prayed for the transgressors (the people who would kill him)²⁸⁶.

The substitutional suffering of the Servant is the ground for justification. His priestly office as the Lamb is the ground for his royal office as the Lion! Outside Jesus Christ there is no salvation and also no Way back to God²⁸⁷!

²⁷⁷ Matthew 11:27; John 8:19; 14:7

²⁷⁸ Not ‘knowledge about the Servant’

²⁷⁹ Genesis 22:17-18; Revelation 6:1-2; 7:9

²⁸⁰ 1 Peter 2:24

²⁸¹ as in Job 27:17

²⁸² John 10:11; 18:9. Jesus Christ laid down his life for all the sheep. Not one has been lost!

²⁸³ Romans 5:17-19

²⁸⁴ Leviticus 17:11

²⁸⁵ Luke 22:37

²⁸⁶ Luke 23:34

²⁸⁷ Luke 10:16; John 14:6; Acts 4:12

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 is most clearly quoted in the New Testament in Acts 8:28-35, Romans 10:16 and 1 Peter 2:22-25. But also compare Matthew 20:28 with Isaiah 53:10 (the Servant) and John 1:29 with Isaiah 53:4,7 (the Lamb). Jesus Christ, had to enter into his glory through suffering (Luke 18:31-33; Luke 24:25-27,44; John 17:5).

Chapter 54. After the first coming of Jesus, the new community will spread out to the nations.

The final two Zion prophecies. The connection is that the salvation of the new community is the result of the substitutional suffering of the Servant. They are “his offspring (Seed)” (53:10). He gained their justification (53:5,11)!

(i) The eternal covenant of peace with the new community (54:1-10). At the end of the exile Zion is pictured as a barren and desolate woman. She has no children and no husband. During the Old Testament period she is still a small remnant of believers. This is quoted in Galatians 4:27 as being fulfilled in the New Testament Church (54:1)! But as in Isaiah 49:14-21 she would multiply again. She must enlarge the place of her tent and lengthen her cords, because she will spread out to the right and to the left. The city would have to be enlarged (cf. 49:20). The people would spread out in all directions²⁸⁸ and possess the nations (54:2-4). The LORD, her Maker, is figuratively her husband who in anger deserted/rejected/abandoned her (to exile), but will again have everlasting compassion on her (54:5-8). His unfailing love (for the remnant of his people) will not be shaken, his covenant of peace (with them) will not be removed (54:10).

(ii) The new community glorified and protected (54:11-17). The afflicted city would be rebuilt with precious stones: dark turquoise, blue sapphires and red rubies, but the colours have no special significance. The prophet first of all refers to the rebuilding of Old Testament Jerusalem, but with intended reference to the higher reality, the New Jerusalem²⁸⁹ (54:11-12). John 6:45 says, “All her children will be taught by the LORD”²⁹⁰ (cf. 2:3; 50:4). Thus this prophecy refers to the New Testament period! The LORD will teach all her sons, the believers, and they will be established in righteousness (they will be justified by faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ)(54:13-14). The LORD created the blacksmith to forge a weapon and likewise he created the destroyer: the Assyrians (10:6) and the Babylonians (39:6) to work havoc. What he had long ago ordained (decided) and planned, he now brought to pass (37:26). But no weapon forged against the remnant of believers would prevail (54:16-17)!

Chapter 55. The new community will summon (invite) the nations.

(i) The new community will invite the nations (55:1-5). A powerful plea to accept the presented salvation. Merchants require money for what they sell, but the LORD gives his salvation free! The thirsty people in the nations are invited to come to the LORD and buy the essential things without money (the Gospel is free)(55:1-2). The LORD made David (a type of the Messiah), a leader and commander (a king), a witness (a prophet) summoning the nations. The Bible combines the office of the king with the office of the prophet and shows that the reign of the Messiah will be established, not by the clatter of weapons, but by spiritual means: by the proclamation of the good news! The Old Testament remnant (for example, the New Testament apostles) will summon nations they do not know (Jews as well as Gentiles). These nations will hasten to join the new community (55:3-5).

(ii) However, the nations must seek the LORD while he may be found, call on him while he is near (55:6-13). They must forsake their (evil) ways and turn to the LORD. The LORD will certainly forgive (55:6-7). The LORD’s thoughts and ways are not like that of people. They are higher as the heaven is higher than the earth (55:8-9). The word of the LORD is like rain watering the earth. It will not return empty to him, but accomplish what he desires and achieve the purpose for which he sent it (55:10-11). The remnant will go out (from Babylon as the kingdom of the world) with joy and peace. The mountains and hills will burst into song before the believing remnant coming out. All the trees of the field will clap in their hands (55:12). It is a picture of the new earth; the parched land of the wilderness will rejoice and blossom (cf. 35:1). The LORD will turn the barren desert of the present earth into pools of water and the parched ground into springs on the new earth. He will plant the cedar, acacia, myrtle, olive, pine, fir and cypress together on the new earth (cf. 41:18-19). The frustrated creation (on the present earth) will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God²⁹¹ on the new earth. The transformation of thornbush to pine tree will be the sign of the everlasting glory of the LORD (55:13).

SECTION 9. Isaiah 56:1 – 66:24.

Prophecies about Zion and a variety of other subjects.

The 9th and final section of the Book of Isaiah has 10 sub-divisions, each with a different subject.

Sub-division 1. Chapter 56. Salvation for the proselytes and eunuchs.

Chapter 56:1-8. The new community is also for alien believers, still pictured in Old Testament terms.

The Old Testament terms for belonging to the new community (56:1-8). Verses 2, 6 and 7 show that even the Old Testament prophetic writings do not reach the height of the New Testament. They still speak of keeping the Sabbath, of bringing offerings and sacrifices and worshipping in the temple at Jerusalem. Nevertheless the main issue is to still hold fast to the covenant, the words in the Bible, by faith (cf. 59:21)!

²⁸⁸ cf. Genesis 28:14

²⁸⁹ Revelation 21:9-27

²⁹⁰ 1 John 2:27

²⁹¹ Romans 8:19-20.

Aliens and eunuchs who have bound themselves to the LORD, who hold fast to his covenant and serve the LORD, will surely not be excluded from his people (56:3-6)! They will not be cut off! The LORD will also bring them to his holy mountain (the new community). “Not one will be lost”²⁹²! The house of the LORD (the new community) will be a house of prayer for all nations (56:7)! The LORD who will gather the exiles (from Babylon) will gather still others (Gentile believers) to them²⁹³. This is a prophecy about the worldwide mission of the Church in the New Testament period²⁹⁴ (56:8)!

Sub-division 2. Chapter 57a. Sin of the ordinary (natural) Israelites.

Chapter 56:9 – 57:13a. Announcement of judgement against apostate Israelites and their leaders.

There is no indication when this prophecy has been written. The idolatry depicted here reminds one of the prophecies of Hosea (754 – 714 BC) and this prophecy probably dates before the exile to Babylon (the time of Manasseh)(695-641 BC).

(i) The leaders of Israel are wicked (56:9 – 57:2). Israel’s watchmen, the prophets, priests and other leaders are blind and do not see the sin of the people. Like street dogs they do not bark, but lie around and love to sleep and dream (56:10). They have mighty appetites to eat anything, each turning to his own way and seeking his own gain (56:11). They are full of beer (cf. 28:7-8)(56:12). The righteous and devout believers perish in this violence, they are snatched away into eternal peace (57:1-2).

(ii) The people of Israel are idolaters (57:3-13a). The prophet calls the people of Israel during the period of the kings ‘sons of a sorceress’, ‘the offspring of adulterers and prostitutes’. They are ‘a brood of rebels’, ‘offspring of liars’ (57:3-4). The prophet summarises the detestable idolatry of the Canaanite nations which were also practised in Israel, especially under king Manasseh (695-641 BC)²⁹⁵. The Israelites burn with lust (spiritual immorality with idols and sexual immorality with prostitutes) among the oaks and under every spreading tree. They sacrifice their children and other sacrifices in the ravines to their idols. They hide their pagan symbols behind their closed door. They practise (spiritual and physical) prostitution with the heathen (57:5-8). They travel to Ammon to worship the god Molech with olive oil and spices (57:9). They do not fear the LORD, because he has been silent for a long time. But the silence of the LORD means that he was very patient and did not intervene or act with his judgement (57:10-11). *However, the LORD’s patience will end and he will expose* ‘the righteousness and works (of the idols)’ (ironically intended) (57:12). When the Israelites cry out for help, let their collection of idols save them. These Israelites will be blown away (in exile to Babylon) (57:13a)!

Sub-division 3. Chapter 57b. Salvation for the believing remnant of Israel.

Chapter 57:13b-21. Announcement of salvation for the believing remnant.

(i) The believing remnant (57:13b-19). The person who makes the LORD his refuge, will inherit the land and possess his holy mountain. He will belong to the Lord’s new community (57:13b). The LORD lives in a high and holy place (heaven), but (through his Holy Spirit) also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit. He revives their spirit and heart (57:15). He will not accuse forever or always be angry, otherwise the spirit of people would grow faint (57:16). For a while the LORD in holy anger hid his face from their wilful ways (57:17). The LORD will heal, guide, restore, comfort (the lowly and contrite in spirit)(57:18-19). Thus the LORD will create praise on the lips of those who mourn for the sin of the Israelites (cf. 66:10). In Isaiah 57:19 the LORD proclaims “peace to those far and to those near”. This is quoted in Ephesians 2:13-14 and points to the new community of believers, “the Israel of God”²⁹⁶ which the LORD is gathering from nations in all corners of the earth (cf. 11:12; 43:6; 49:12).

(ii) The wicked (57:20-21). The wicked, however, are like the tossing of the sea. It cannot rest, but its waves casts up mire and mud. The prophecy ends with a short summary: “There is no peace (wholeness)”, says the LORD, “for the wicked” (cf. 48:22)(57:20-21)!

Sub-division 4. Chapter 58. False and true religion.

Chapter 58. The new community denies itself (humbles itself, fasts) by way of doing justice and sharing.

The prophecy does not speak about sacrificing animals, but rather about fasting (58:3-6) and a more respectful keeping of the Sabbath (58:13-14). Because the age old foundations of Jerusalem are still lying in ruins (58:12), the prophecy is probably dated during the exile in Babylon (586-516 BC).

(i) The outward religion of Israel (58:1-5). In several periods of the history of Israel, religion consisted of outward religious practices of the ceremonial law: have a temple and its surrounding buildings, priests and their elaborate robes, religious festivals, animal sacrifices, circumcision, ablutions and gifts. *The LORD teaches that genuine religion is rather inward and spiritual*²⁹⁷! Therefore, the LORD declares to Israel their rebellion and sins (58:1). They pretend to be eager to know God’s ways and ask him about his requirements for righteousness. Yet they forsake the commands God gave them (58:2). They do business and drive on (exploit) their workers (especially on the day they ought to rest)(58:3).

²⁹² cf. John 18:9

²⁹³ Psalm 87:4-6; Isaiah 19:23-25; Jeremiah 12:16

²⁹⁴ cf. Matthew 28:18-20

²⁹⁵ Hosea 1-3; 2 Kings 21:2-11

²⁹⁶ Galatians 6:16

²⁹⁷ cf. John 4:23-24

They quarrel and fight with fists, yet expect that God would listen to their prayers (58:4). They call a 'fast' bowing their heads and lying on sackcloth and ashes just for the show (58:5).

(ii) The inward devotion (58:6-12). The kind of fasting the LORD finds acceptable is to unlock the chains (of slavery) and break the yoke (of oppression) (58:6); to share your food with the hungry, to provide the wanderer with shelter and to clothe the naked (58:7). Then the LORD will answer your prayers. The kind of fasting the LORD finds acceptable is to do away with pointing the finger (false accusation) and malicious talk (gossip) (58:9); and to spend yourself physically, socially, financially, intellectually, emotionally in behalf of the needy people in the world (58:10). Then the LORD will guide you always, satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and strengthen your frame. Then you will be like a well-watered garden, a spring whose waters never fail (58:11). Then your people (those who follow in your footsteps, your disciples) will rebuild the ancient ruins and raise up the age-old foundations. You will be called 'repairer of broken walls', restorer of streets with dwellings' (58:12). Therefore, stop doing as you please. Stop speaking idle words. Stop going your own way. Then you will find true joy in the LORD and the LORD will cause you to ride on the heights of the land, that is, exalt you to be someone who has great influence (58:13-14)!

Sub-division 5. Chapter 59. Salvation only after repentance.

Chapter 59. The new community is saved only after repentance.

The prophecy speaks of an emergency situation, a crisis during the life-time of Isaiah, which shows a resemblance to chapter 1. This prophecy is probably dated during the period of king Manasseh (695-641 BC).

(i) The prophet rebukes the sins of Israel in the name of the LORD (59:1-8). The arm of the LORD is not too short to save nor his ear to dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from God; your sins have hidden his face from you. So that he will not hear (59:1-2). No one (in Israel) calls for justice. No one pleads his case with integrity. They rely on empty arguments and speak lies (59:3-4). They hatch evil like vipers and weave cobwebs of violence like spiders (59:5-6). Their deeds are evil, their acts violent, their feet rush into sin, their thoughts ruinous. They do not know the way of peace and have turned justice into crooked roads (59:7-8).

(ii) The prophet prays a prayer of penance in the name of the people who repent (59:9-15a). Justice is far from us. We look for light but all is darkness. We grope along the wall like the blind and feel our way like men without eyes (59:9-10). We look for justice and deliverance, but find none (59:11). Our sins testify against us. We need to acknowledge our iniquities, rebellion, treachery, turning our backs on God, fomenting oppression and revolt (participate in strikes and road blocks) (59:12-13). We speak lies, truth and honesty cannot enter the city. Even those believers who shun evil (or aid workers) become a prey (to the evildoers)(59:14-15a).

(iii) The LORD sees, is displeased and prepares the future redemption (59:15b-21). The LORD is appalled that there is no one to intervene (59:15b-16)! Therefore the LORD puts on his armour²⁹⁸ (59:17). The LORD will come as the Judge of the world and repay the wicked according to what they have done²⁹⁹. His enemies include unbelieving Gentiles as well as disobedient Jews (59:18). Because the LORD's retribution will come with irresistible power like a pent-up flood, people will fear and revere the LORD in the west and in the east (59:19). But the LORD will also come as the Redeemer of his people, to save those who repent from their sins (59:20).

(iv) The covenant of the LORD with his new community. 'the Israel of God' (59:21). The covenant of the LORD is that the LORD will come as Deliverer and turn away godlessness from his people and "in this way" all his people will be saved³⁰⁰. The outpouring of the LORD's Spirit is the first blessing (benefaction) in the Messianic Period³⁰¹. The Spirit of the LORD on the new community and the words he puts in the mouth of his servants will not depart from their mouths and from the mouths of their descendants forever (59:21)³⁰².

Sub-division 6. Chapters 60 - 62. The salvation of Zion.

Chapter 60. The ideal of the new community on the present earth and the reality of the new community on the new earth (cf. Revelation 21).

This is a Zion prophecy like those in Isaiah chapters 49-55. It describes the situation after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (after 586 BC), but it is not clear whether the people are still in exile or have returned from exile. The prophecy is probably before the return from exile (516 BC), because (i) the walls of Jerusalem have not yet been rebuild (60:10), (ii) the people are still captives and prisoners (61:1), (iii) the land of Zion is still desolate, (iv) her restoration (marriage) is still future (62:4-5) and (v) preparation of a highway is made for her return (62:10). *In the light of the New Testament, Zion is a picture of the New Testament Church described in Old Testament features.*

The prophecy pictures the glory of the LORD rising upon Zion, the community of God's people. The nations in the world come to her light (60:1-2) in order to build and decorate her (60:10-11,17). *Zion becomes the dwelling place of God (60:13)³⁰³ and a city of pure righteousness³⁰⁴ (60:21).*

²⁹⁸ cf. Ephesians 6:12-17

²⁹⁹ cf. Romans 2:6

³⁰⁰ cf. Romans 11:26-27

³⁰¹ Acts 2:1-4

³⁰² cf. Matthew 10:31-33

³⁰³ cf. Ephesians 2:19-22

³⁰⁴ cf. Revelation 21:27

On the one hand it is a prophecy for the LORD's Old Testament people that there is still a great future for earthly Jerusalem (after the return from exile), to encourage them not to give up their love for the theocracy of which Jerusalem was the centre.

On the other hand it is a prophecy for the LORD's New Testament people that Zion surpasses the pure literal earthly reality and points to the heavenly Jerusalem (the Church) as the ideal reality during the Messianic Era or New Testament Period on the present earth and to the new Jerusalem (the Church) as the ultimate reality after the second coming of Christ on the new earth.

(i) The glory of Zion (60:1-5a). The light of the glory of the LORD, that is, the self-revelation of his divine attributes, rises on the new community³⁰⁵ (60:1), while darkness (ignorance of the living God) is still on the earth (60:2). The nations on earth (both Gentiles and Jews) that are still in darkness will come to the light (revelation) of the new community³⁰⁶. The sons and daughters of the new community will come from afar, being carried on the arms of the nations (cf. 49:22)(60:3-4). These believers will be radiant and joyful (60:5a).

(ii) The rebuilding of Zion (60:5b-14a). This is a prophecy looking forward to the heavenly Jerusalem and the reign of Jesus Christ during the New Testament period. The wealth of the nations will be brought into Zion³⁰⁷ on camels and in ships, because the LORD has endowed his new community with splendour (60:5b-9).

Aliens (who have become part of the chosen remnant) will rebuild her walls³⁰⁸ (cf. 61:5). The gates will always stand open to receive the people and the wealth of the nations³⁰⁹. The (second) temple in Jerusalem, the place of the LORD's feet, will be adorned with the wood from Lebanon (60:13).

Nations will only be able to exist in the way of serving the heavenly Jerusalem³¹⁰. The nation or kingdom that will not serve Jesus Christ and his people, will certainly perish. "Kiss the Son (Jesus Christ), lest you will be destroyed in your way"³¹¹. The descendants of Israel's former oppressors will come and bow down at the feet of the LORD's new community (the heavenly Jerusalem)(60:14)³¹².

Note the quotation in Revelation 3:9, "The Lord Jesus Christ will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews³¹³ though they are not, but are liars, - he will make them come and fall down at your feet (the believers during the New Testament period) and acknowledge that I (Jesus Christ) have loved you."

(iii) The glory of the heavenly Jerusalem (60:14b-27). The glory of the heavenly Jerusalem depicted surpasses the mere earthly reality and carries the reader into a new world. The new community is called 'the City of the LORD' (60:14b). The temple's most precious wood will be replaced by precious metals (60:17). The prophet continues with an allegory: the rulers will be righteous, the result will be genuine peace; the walls will be salvation (60:18). "The new heaven and earth will be the home of righteousness"³¹⁴. The sun will no more be her light³¹⁵, because the LORD will be her everlasting light and glory³¹⁶. The days of her sorrow will end³¹⁷. All her people will be righteous³¹⁸. They will possess the land (the new earth) forever³¹⁹. They are the shoot planted by the LORD³²⁰. They are the work of the LORD's hands³²¹. They display the LORD's splendour (44:23). The least of them will become a thousand and the smallest a mighty nation, which means that the chosen, believing remnant will multiply to an uncountable number³²² (60:10-22).

Chapter 61. The ministry of the prophet is a figurative type of the ministry of the Messiah and of the ministry of the new community.

The Old Testament notion was that foreigners would serve the Jews, rebuild their land and cities (60:10) and take care of their flocks and fields, while the Jews would be the priests and ministers of the LORD (61:5-6). Israel would be the centre of the world (2:2-4) and foreign nations could only become part of the people of God by joining the Jews (becoming Jews)(56:3-8).

However, the New Testament reveals the opposite of this notion! The New Testament believers will make Israel envious³²³. Unbelieving Jews will be cut off from the olive tree (God's people) to make place for believing Gentiles³²⁴. The Old Testament believers will only be made perfect together with the New Testament believers³²⁵!

³⁰⁵ Revelation 21:11

³⁰⁶ Revelation 21:24

³⁰⁷ Revelation 21:26

³⁰⁸ Revelation 21:12-14

³⁰⁹ Revelation 21:25

³¹⁰ cf. Zechariah 14:16-17

³¹¹ cf. Psalm 2:10; Psalm 110:1-6; Daniel 2:34; 1 Corinthians 15:24-25

³¹² Hebrews 12:22-24

³¹³ Claim to be believers, but in reality are fake believers, name believers, cultural believers.

Cf. John 3:7: "You should not be surprised at Jesus saying, "You must be born again!"

³¹⁴ cf. 2 Peter 3:13

³¹⁵ Revelation 21:23

³¹⁶ Revelation 22:5

³¹⁷ Revelation 7:17; 21:4

³¹⁸ Revelation 1:27

³¹⁹ Matthew 5:5; Romans 4:13

³²⁰ cf. Matthew 15:13

³²¹ cf. Ephesians 2:10

³²² Micah 4:7

³²³ Romans 11:11

³²⁴ Romans 11:16-24

³²⁵ Hebrews 11:39-40

(i) The Announcer of salvation (61:1-3). The speaker is the prophet that announces the restoration of Zion. Ultimately the speaker is the Servant of the LORD himself (cf. 42:7; 49:8-9)³²⁶. The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on him. While people can only anoint with oil, he anoints with the Spirit to the office of prophet that preaches the good news, priest that binds up the broken-hearted and king that frees captives³²⁷. He proclaims the LORD's favour (salvation for believers)³²⁸ and the LORD's judgement (the day of vengeance). This is being fulfilled by Jesus Christ at his first coming³²⁹. He bestows on those who are bruised, in despair and mourn, a crown, gladness and praise. Zion's citizens are called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendour³³⁰.

(ii) The revival of Zion (61:4-6). After the return from exile the Chaldeans will rebuild the ancient ruins (walls) of Jerusalem (61:4), serve them in shepherding their flocks and work in their fields and vineyards (61:5), while the Jews will occupy the higher functions of being priests and ministers of the LORD (61:6).

The notion during the Old Testament period was that (i) "Zion is the centre of the future kingdom of God" (cf. 2:2-4) and that (ii) "salvation is from the Jews"³³¹ and that (iii) Gentiles would only participate in this salvation through becoming Jews (Jewish proselytes) (56:3-8)³³². (iv) The Jews would feed on the wealth of the Gentile nations (cf. 23:18).

(iii) The double portion of the land as reward for Zion (61:7-9). Instead of their former shame as exiled slaves, they will receive the inheritance of the firstborn and everlasting joy (61:7). The reason is that the LORD hates unjust robbery of the land and iniquity. He will make an everlasting covenant with the faithful remnant (61:8). The nations will acknowledge that they (the remnant) are a people the LORD has blessed (61:9)³³³.

(iv) The Announcer is also the bearer and bringer of salvation and righteousness (61:10-11). He is clothed in the garments of salvation and righteousness. The suffering Servant of the LORD of Isaiah 53 is glorified (adorned) with salvation and righteousness in Isaiah 61. What he accomplished he gives to his people. As a garden causes seeds to grow, so the LORD will make his righteousness spring up before all the nations in the world.

Chapter 62. The ministry of the watchmen is figurative of the ministry of the proclaimers of the good news until the new community is completely established.

(i) The speaker is the prophet who will not keep silent (62:1-3). Isaiah will not keep silent for the sake of the new community (the New Testament Community, the Church) until (i) the righteousness and salvation (synonyms) of Zion (the believers in the new community) shine like a blazing torch, (ii) the nations see her righteousness and glory³³⁴, (iii) she is called by a new name³³⁵ (62:1-2), (iv) the proclamation (of the gospel) has made been made to the ends of the earth³³⁶ and (v) the Saviour has come (62:11-12). Zion will be a crown in the hand of the LORD (thus showing that the LORD is more than the crown)(62:3).

(ii) The new name of the community (62:4-5) is a sign that a complete change (transformation, transition from the old order to the new order) has taken place! The nations used to call the old community (the natural nation of Israel) 'Deserted and Desolate' (cf. 60:15), but she (the new community) will be called 'the LORD's delight is in her' (Hephzibah) and 'the LORD rejoices in his married bride' (Beulah)³³⁷. The new community will be called 'the Holy People', 'the Redeemed of the LORD', 'Sought After' and 'the City No Longer Deserted' (62:12). The Holy City, (heavenly) Jerusalem (Zion)³³⁸, will be called 'the new Jerusalem'³³⁹.

(iii) The watchmen posted on the walls of Jerusalem (62:6-7). The prophet and others he appointed will never be silent day or night. They remind (call on) the LORD³⁴⁰ to restore Zion until he has established the new community and has made it (the new Jerusalem) the praise of the earth. The LORD swore that on the new earth no-one will rob his people from their food and drink (62:8-9).

(iv) The Saviour and his people are coming (62:10-12). A prophecy that the exiles will return, passing through the gates of Babylon; that people must build up the (symbolic) highway by which they return and that a (symbolic) banner must be raised which all exiled people in the nations of the world can see so that they can join the procession (cf. 11:12; 49:22)(62:10). Thus "the LORD makes proclamation to the ends of the earth", causing the exiles to hear the message of liberation wherever they are. Liberation, salvation and reward comes with the coming of the LORD himself (62:11-12).

³²⁶ cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12

³²⁷ cf. Mark 1:8, "Jesus Christ baptises with the Holy Spirit."

³²⁸ cf. Mark 1:15

³²⁹ Luke 4:17-19

³³⁰ Matthew 5:14-16

³³¹ John 4:22

³³² Acts 2:5,11

³³³ Genesis 22:17-18; cf. Romans 11:4-10; Galatians 3:16

³³⁴ cf. Matthew 5:14-16

³³⁵ "The disciples were called Christians" (Acts 11:26). "The new Jerusalem is the Bride, the Wife of the Lord" (Revelation 21:2,9-1).

³³⁶ cf. Matthew 24:14

³³⁷ Isaiah 54:1;5-8

³³⁸ "The heavenly Jerusalem." Hebrews 12:22-24.

³³⁹ "The new Jerusalem." Revelation 2:17; 3:12; 21:2,9-11.

³⁴⁰ Luke 18:1-8; 2 Timothy 4:2. Luke 11:2 "Your Kingdom come."

Sub-division 7. Chapters 63:1-6. The day of vengeance.

Chapter 63:1-6. The day of vengeance.

The prophet speaks of future events as if they have already taken place in order to emphasize the absolute certainty of the final judgement of the nations and the final redemption of his people.

The day of vengeance against the nations has arrived and makes the redemption of his people possible (cf. 59:15b-20)(63:1-6). The LORD is depicted with garments spattered with blood, trampling the (unbelieving) nations in his anger³⁴¹. He is robed with splendour, symbolising his majesty, power and triumphant entry (63:1). Both his words and deeds are righteous (63:2)! The grapes trodden in holy anger in the winepress are the unbelieving nations³⁴². He planned the day of vengeance for the unrepentant (cf. 61:2b) to be at the same time as the year of his redemption (cf. 62:2a) for his believing remnant (62:4)³⁴³. The LORD was appalled that there was no one to help (the believing remnant in their tribulation) (62:5). Therefore he trampled these godless nations in his holy and righteous anger (63:6).

Sub-division 8. Chapter 63:7 – 64:12. Prayer of penance, imploring redemption.

Chapter 63:7 – 64:12. A prayer of penance, imploring redemption.

The prophecy speaks of an emergency situation, a crisis in which the sanctuary in Jerusalem had been trampled (63:18; 64:11) and the city had been destroyed by fire (64:10-11). Therefore the prophecy is probably dated during the exile (586-516 BC). The Holy Spirit inspired the prophet Isaiah to record this prayer of penance and psalm of praise to God so that the later exiles would use it as a prayer and a praise.

(i) Recalling the former kindnesses of the LORD and the rebellion of the people (63:7-10). The prophet recalls that the LORD made a covenant with Israel: “Surely, they are my people”³⁴⁴. The LORD became their Saviour (63:8). The LORD empathized with his people: “In all their distress he too was distressed”. The Angel of his presence (Jesus Christ before his incarnation), saved them. The LORD’s presence and nearness is the characteristic of the people of God³⁴⁵. He redeemed them in his love and mercy and lifted them up and carried them all the days of old (the days they lived in Canaan) (cf. 46:3)(63:9)³⁴⁶. Yet the people of Israel rebelled and grieved his Spirit (during their journey to the Promised Land and living in it). So the LORD turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them (by exiling them to Babylon) (63:10).

(ii) Recalling the former days of Moses, Abraham and Israel (63:11-19). The prophet recalls the crossing of the Red Sea under Moses³⁴⁷ (63:11-13) and the Lord from his lofty throne in heaven giving the Holy Spirit to their leaders³⁴⁸ to guide them (63:14). The prophet asks the LORD to show his tenderness and compassion (63:15). He acknowledges the LORD as their Father (Creator), even though Abraham does not know the later Israelites or Jacob (Israel) does not acknowledge the later Israelites (63:16). He acknowledges the sin of Israel, their wandering from the LORD’s ways, their hardening of hearts and their not revering the LORD (63:17). He asks the LORD to return to his former people that possessed the holy land for a little while (1407-586 BC). But now (586-516 BC) the sanctuary has been trampled down (63:18). *The Israelites (in exile) have become like the heathen nations over whom the LORD has not ruled and who have never been called ‘the LORD’s people’* (63:19). Nothing of the former glory of Israel is still seen!

(iii) Recalling God’s acting on behalf of the people who wait for him and Israel’s present sins (64:1-12). On behalf of the future exiles the prophet prays that the LORD would rend the heavens and *come down and do awesome things that his people do not expect* (64:1-3). *Never has anyone ever heard of or seen a God who acts on behalf of those who wait for him* (the faithful remnant)³⁴⁹ (64:4)! The LORD meets people who gladly do what is right and think of his ways. But, see, (now) the LORD is rightfully angry and the natural nation of Israel is sinful and godless (64:5). “All of us have become like one unclean and all our righteous acts (human good works) are (dirty) like filthy rags (in God’s eyes. Never good enough)! Therefore, we all shrivel up like a leaf and like the wind our sins sweep us away (64:6). Because of our sins the LORD hides his face from us (we do not experience his reality or nearness) and the sins cause us to waste away (physically, socially, spiritually)”³⁴⁹ (64:7).

On behalf of the future exiles the prophet pleads with the LORD to restore the former relationship: “You are our Creator (Father); you are the Potter that made us (the clay) into a work of your hands (64:8)! He asks the LORD not to remember the sins of Israel forever (cf. 43:25; 38:17; 44:22)³⁵⁰ because the (believing) Israelites are his people (64:9). The prophet recalls the destruction of the cities in Judah and the temple (in 586 BC) and asks whether the LORD would remain silent and utterly destroy the Israelites (64:10-12).

³⁴¹ Revelation 19:11-16, especially verse 13, “He (Christ) is dressed in a robe dipped in blood”

³⁴² Revelation 14:20

³⁴³ cf. Matthew 25:31-33

³⁴⁴ Exodus 19:4-6

³⁴⁵ Exodus 33:14-16

³⁴⁶ Deuteronomy 1:31

³⁴⁷ Exodus 14:19-22

³⁴⁸ Numbers 11:17

³⁴⁹ Freely quoted in 1 Corinthians 2:9

³⁵⁰ Hebrews 8:12; 10:17

Sub-division 9. Chapter 65. Judgement for provocative Israel. Salvation for the servants of the LORD.

Chapter 65. Judgement for carnal Israel³⁵¹, but salvation for God's Israel³⁵² (the remnant).

There is no indication when this prophecy has been written. This prophecy is similar to the prophecy in Isaiah 56:9 - 57:13b and relates the idolatrous conditions during Isaiah's own lifetime (65:3-4). The prophecy probably dates before the exile to Babylon (the time of Manasseh)(695-641 BC).

(i) The sovereign free and merciful grace of the LORD towards his people (65:1-5a). The LORD revealed himself to those who did not ask for him and he was found by those who did not seek him (65:1). He said, "Here am I" to a nation that did not call on his name. The election of Israel³⁵³ was only by God's love and grace; completely undeserved (65:1)³⁵⁴. The New Testament applies this verse to the calling of the Gentiles: God's sovereign, free and merciful grace shown to the heathen (Romans 10:20-21)³⁵⁵. But all day long the LORD held out his hands to an obstinate people (Israel). They walked in evil ways, and pursued their own imaginations (65:2). They continually provoked the LORD to his face by their gross idolatry (sacrifices in gardens, incense altars, keeping secret vigils among the graves, eating flesh of pigs)(65:3-4).

(ii) Judgment for hardened Israel (65:5b-7,11-12). The LORD is very indignant (angry) and will make them pay the full payment for their sins and the sins of their fathers. They forsook the LORD and forgot his temple. They spread a table for Fortune and drank wine for Destiny (65:11). The LORD called but they did not answer, spoke but they did not listen. Therefore the LORD will determine their lot to be slaughtered by the sword (65:12).

(iii) Salvation is for the chosen remnant (65:8-10). A cluster of grapes with juice in it is not completely destroyed because of the bad grapes on it. On behalf of his servants (the faithful remnant) the LORD will not destroy all Israel (65:8). His chosen people (the servants) will inherit and live on the mountains of Judah (65:9). They will inherit the best of the land: the pastures of Sharon and resting places in the Valley of Achor (65:10).

(iv) The two destinations (65:13-16). While the LORD's servants will enjoy food, rejoice and sing out of the joy of their hearts, provocative (carnal) Israel will suffer hunger, be put to shame and cry out from anguish in brokenness of spirit (65:13-14). The sinful nation will leave the name 'Israel' to the LORD's chosen people as a curse.

But the LORD will give to his servants (the believing remnant) another name. See Psalm 105:15, the name 'Mishichi' or 'people of the Messiah'. See Acts 11:26, the name 'Christianous' or 'people of Christ' (62:2) (65:15). Blessings will be invoked and oaths will be sworn by the God of the truth. While "the guilt of Ephraim (Israel) is stored up and his sins are kept on record"³⁵⁶, "the past troubles of the faithful remnant will be forgotten and hidden from the LORD's eyes". He does not want to remind them or punish them for their past troubles anymore! "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more. (I will never remind them of their former sins!)"³⁵⁷.

(v) The creation of new heavens and a new earth (65:17-25). The LORD will create new heavens (a new universe) and a new (planet) earth³⁵⁸. He already proclaimed this before in Isaiah 51:1,16; 60:19-22; 66:22 and this proclamation is taken up in the New Testament in 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1. The history of this world is moving towards the new heavens and the new earth! The old life with its failures, hurts, broken relationships and losses will not be remembered by anyone. In Revelation 21:5 Jesus says, "I am making all things new." In Jesus Christ "the old has gone, the new has come"³⁵⁹ "The former things will not be remembered" (65:17). The LORD will create Jerusalem (the new community) to be a delight (to be the bride of the Lamb³⁶⁰) (65:18). On the new earth there will only be believers; only 'the LORD's people'. "The LORD will rejoice over (the new) Jerusalem and take delight in his people". The sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more. "There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away"³⁶¹. Jesus Christ will wipe away every tear from their eyes³⁶² (65:19).

But in the Old Testament the new earth is still pictured in Old Testament terms: in terms of the blessings in Canaan. The genuine believers will live very long lives: infants will not die young, young men will reach a hundred years and old men will live out their years. The description is not literally intended, because people will live as long as very old trees (65:22) and in reality live forever because death will be swallowed up forever (cf. 25:8)(65:20)! People will build houses and plant vineyards (65:21). People will never toil in vain, but enjoy the work of their hands for a very long time³⁶³ (65:22). They will see their descendants for a long time and be a people blessed by the LORD³⁶⁴ (cf. 61:9)(65:23). Their prayers will be immediately heard and answered (65:24). The wild animals will no longer kill one another. The serpent (a symbol of Satan) will undergo his curse (in hell)³⁶⁵ without harming mankind any longer (on the new earth). "They will neither harm nor destroy on the LORD's holy mountain (the centre of the new earth)(cf. 11:6-9) (65:25)!"

³⁵¹ "Carnal Israel" (1 Corinthians 10:18)

³⁵² "God's Israel" (Galatians 6:14-16)

³⁵³ Deuteronomy 7:7-9

³⁵⁴ Hosea 1:10; 2:23

³⁵⁵ Hosea 1:10; 2:23; Romans 9:25-26

³⁵⁶ Hosea 13:12; cf. Revelation 20:12

³⁵⁷ Hebrews 10:17

³⁵⁸ Revelation 21:1,5

³⁵⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:17

³⁶⁰ Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21:2

³⁶¹ Revelation 21:4

³⁶² Revelation 14:13

³⁶³ cf. Revelation 14:13

³⁶⁴ cf. Genesis 12:17-18

³⁶⁵ Revelation 20:10

Sub-division 10. Chapter 66. Idolators punished. Zion glorified.

Chapter 66. The new community will proclaim the glory of the LORD among the nations and endure forever.

Chapter 66 is probably a combination of several prophecies in different periods. Verse 1-4 and 17 relate the idolatrous conditions in the time of Manasseh (695-641 BC) (cf. 1:11-15; 65:3-4). Verse 5 probably refers to the oppression of believers during that same time. The other verses in chapter 66 clearly *take their point of departure in the conditions during the Babylonian exile (586-516 BC)*.

(i) Opposing the false trust in outward religion (66:1-5). The LORD made heaven and earth. Heaven is his throne and earth his footstool. Therefore man and his religion can never add anything (a temple or the outward ceremonies of religion)(cf. 1:11-15) that would please the LORD (66:1). What pleases the sovereign LORD is inward attitude and transformation: a humble and contrite heart and faith and obedience in God's Word (to tremble at his Word)(cf. 57:15)(66:2). Religion in which man chooses his own ways (outward religious ceremonies) and worships idols is an abomination to the LORD (66:3). Therefore the LORD will choose to bring upon those people harsh treatment and whatever they dread! When he called, the unbelievers did not respond and when he spoke they did listen, but they did what was evil in his eyes and displeased him (66:4). The believers who tremble at the LORD's Word, however, are hated by their fellow citizens who do not believe³⁶⁶ and excluded from the temple³⁶⁷. Their oppressors mock them by saying (with sarcasm), "Let us see your joy" (when we persecute you)! (66:5).

(ii) Announcement of judgement of carnal Jerusalem (66:6,14b-16). The uproar coming from the temple in Jerusalem is the sound of the LORD repaying the Judeans who had backslidden what they deserve (66:6). The LORD's fury will be shown to his foes. He is coming with fire and his chariots are like a whirlwind (cf. 10:17; 30:27) and will execute judgement on all (unbelieving) men with the sword (66:14-16). *In this prophecy the judgement of the unbelievers (before the return from exile) becomes a prophecy of the final judgement of all unbelievers (at the second coming of Jesus Christ)*.

(iii) Announcement of salvation of spiritual Jerusalem (66:7-14a). Jerusalem goes into labour and gives birth to 'a son', that is, is replenished with new citizens (66:7). Within a moment the new nation (Judah) is born (66:8). No one can stop the LORD from doing this (66:9). Let all exiled Judeans (Jews) who mourn for what they lost in the past rejoice now for what is coming in the future (66:10). *In this prophecy the Jerusalem (after the return from exile) becomes a prophecy of the heavenly Jerusalem (after the first coming of Jesus Christ) (cf. 66:7)³⁶⁸ and of the new Jerusalem (after the second coming of Jesus Christ)*. This Jerusalem will delight in her overflowing abundance (66:11)³⁶⁹. The LORD will extend peace (perfect wholeness, prosperity, affluence, undisturbed joy) to her like a broad river (cf. 8:6; 33:21). The wealth of the nations will be brought into her³⁷⁰ (66:12). The believing remnant will be carried into her – in the Old Testament view this would happen "on the arms of the Gentile nations", but in the New Testament revelation this will be "by the hand of the Lord" Jesus Christ³⁷¹. This will be the comfort (cf. 40:1) and joy of the LORD's people (66:13).

(iv) The good news proclaimed to all the nations (66:17-21). *The LORD will send some of the survivors (Jews) from the exile to far away nations³⁷² to declare God's glory among the nations. This is a prophecy fulfilled by the New Testament apostles who went out to make disciples in all the nations³⁷³. And the LORD will appoint some of the Gentiles who bring God's people (the dispersed Judeans) to his holy mountain in Jerusalem (66:20) to be priests and Levites (cf. 61:6)(66:21). This is a prophecy of the New Testament Church proclaiming the gospel to all the nations, including Israel³⁷⁴ (66:20-21)!*

Carnal Israel (before the return from exile) will meet their end together³⁷⁵ (66:17), but *'all nations' and 'tongues' will be gathered together at Christ's second coming and see the glory of the LORD (66:18). The 'sign' the LORD will set among all people is "the Son of man appearing in the sky, sending his angels to gather the elect" as well as to gather the reprobate (those excluded from salvation) before his throne in heavenly glory³⁷⁶ (66:19).*

(v) The eternal destiny of people is depicted in Old Testament terms (66:22-24). The prophet depicts the end of history still in Old Testament terms. The citizens of earthly Jerusalem will go out and look upon the dead bodies of all who rebelled against the LORD. *Then the prophet breaks away from all earthly limitations and speaks of the universality of submission to the LORD: all mankind will come and bow down before the LORD (66:23). He speaks of the eternal destiny of unbelievers: their worm (cf. 14:11) will not die, nor will their fire be quenched³⁷⁷ (66:24). And he speaks of the eternal destiny of believers: the name and descendants of those who are God's people, 'the Israel of God'³⁷⁸, will endure before the LORD as long as the new heavens and the new earth that he makes will endure (66:22)!*

³⁶⁶ cf. Luke 6:22 "Blessed are you when men hate you, exclude you, insult you, reject your name as evil because of the Son of Man."

³⁶⁷ cf. John 9:22 "The Jews had decided to put anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ out of the synagogue."

³⁶⁸ cf. Revelation 12:5

³⁶⁹ cf. John 1:16

³⁷⁰ cf. Revelation 21:26

³⁷¹ cf. Deuteronomy 1:31; Jeremiah 31:32; Colossians 1:13

³⁷² Tarshish in the Middle East, Libyans in north Africa, Lydians/Lud in western Turkey and possibly Iran, Tubal in the Caucasus (Georgia), Greece.

³⁷³ Matthew 28:18-20

³⁷⁴ cf. Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:5,9; Revelation 1:6

³⁷⁵ cf. Matthew 25:41-46

³⁷⁶ Matthew 24:30-31; Matthew 15:31-33

³⁷⁷ Mark 9:48; Matthew 25:46. "They will go away to *eternal punishment*, but the righteous to *eternal life*."

³⁷⁸ Galatians 6:14-16